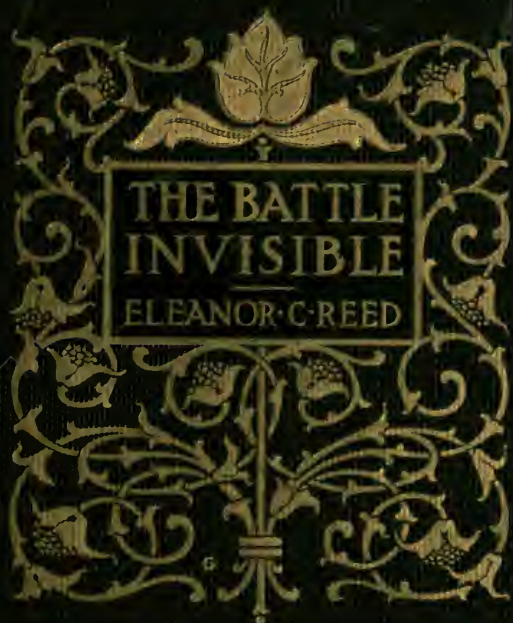




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THE
BATTLE INVISIBLE
AND OTHER STORIES

BY
ELEANOR C. REED



CHICAGO
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1901

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CONTENTS

THE BATTLE INVISIBLE	-	-	-	-	7
PATIENCE AND PRUDENCE	-	-	-	-	69
TRANSPLANTED	-	-	-	-	103
TOLLIVER'S FOOL	-	-	-	-	155
THE WIDOW PERKINS	-	-	-	-	277

THE BATTLE INVISIBLE

THE BATTLE INVISIBLE

Court was dismissed. The jury, after sitting all night and nearly all day, had found the prisoner not guilty.

Solomon Stone, once more a free man, walked with an unsteady step and a haggard face from the court room, and with his attorney drove away. The throng of men that had attended the trial from beginning to end, each a self appointed judge, gathered in groups of twos and threes on and about the court-house steps, and discussed the case. Every face was either stern or serious. There were many emphatic gestures in the different clusters. Some spoke in low confidential tones, others argumentatively, while a few voices were loud in anger and replete with threats. These were the friends of Nathan Overton who had died, they claimed, from the effects of a blow dealt him on the head by Solomon Stone.

The two men were neighbors, and had quarreled over a blooded colt which both claimed. Solomon sued Nathan for the possession of the

animal, and the court decided in Nathan's favor. Solomon appealed, and lost again.

A few weeks after the last trial, the men met on the river bridge, which was just wide enough for teams to pass one another if each kept on his own side. Solomon was on his way home from town, and Nathan was driving to town with a load of corn. It is not known which driver was out of his track, but they locked wheels, and neither would give way and back up. Finally Solomon, beside himself with anger, whipped up his horses and, having the better team and the stronger wagon, took Nathan's wheel off. Nathan, white and shaking with wrath, hurled an ear of corn at his enemy, the butt end of which struck him in the mouth and knocked out a tooth. It was then that Solomon, enraged with pain and the sight of blood, struck the blow with the heavy end of his whip that ended the quarrel at once and forever. Nathan dropped like a stone and lay unconscious for hours. Solomon washed the blood from his enemy's face, and, believing him dead, drove back to town and gave himself up. Nathan recovered consciousness, but died the next day.

There was much conflicting testimony in court. Some of the doctors contended that the

cause of Nathan Overton's death was heart disease brought on by the excitement of the quarrel; that the blow was a glancing one and not sufficient to cause death.

It was also declared that Nathan's doctor had warned him that his heart was seriously affected, and that any undue excitement might be fatal to him; which evidence, however, was stoutly denied by the doctor himself. Nathan's wife admitted on cross-examination that, a month before Nathan's death, she had remarked to a neighbor that she was going to try to persuade him not to go to the polls during the election, as she feared the excitement might have a bad effect.

Some of Nathan Overton's friends said openly that Solomon Stone's money was all that saved him. Solomon had been obliged to mortgage his farm, for which he had worked and saved all his life, to get the means with which to defend himself. He had been called rich by the neighbors, because he owned a well stocked farm of a hundred acres and owed no man a cent. Now, at the age of sixty, the struggle was before him of saving his hardly earned property from the incumbrance that a moment of uncontrolled passion had laid upon it.

At the age of thirty-two, Solomon Stone had

fallen deeply in love with a young girl of seventeen, the daughter of a Congregational minister, of whose church the young man was a member.

Louisa Claybourne was of the dark French type. She was witty and beautiful, and had been brought up with great care; but she had a vivid imagination and, unfortunately, an innate tendency toward romance and adventure.

Her father, a serious student and an earnest worker, essayed to correct the unhealthy trend of his daughter's mind, by keeping her occupied with the study of history and the bible; but every now and then, in spite of his indefatigable efforts, the springs of romance would bubble up through the pages of Macaulay, Gibbon, and Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Louisa was universally loved for her kindness of heart, sweet temper, and charming manner. She was extremely emotional and, though unconscious of her gift, had the power to play upon the emotions of others. Her eyes were of the kind that speak; that rise and fall with every wave of feeling; that in the same moment can sparkle with fun and melt with melancholy.

Louisa's father objected to Solomon Stone's proposal of marriage on the ground that the difference between their ages was too great. The lover was in no way discouraged by this;

he felt sure that the objection, which was not strong, could be overcome. Louisa, however, was less complaisant. This was just the opportunity, it seemed to her, to feast her hungry soul on the adventure she craved. Although her suitor had never received anything but the kindest treatment from her parents, she insisted upon a secret rendezvous in the woods, a clandestine correspondence, and finally, when weary of these, a runaway marriage; all of these things were most distasteful to her straightforward, matter-of-fact lover and husband.

Two years of humdrum, changeless life as a farmer's wife were all that the visionary Louisa could stand. When their little daughter, Charlotte Alvarella Cushman Stone, was seven months old, the young mother ran away with a third-rate landscape painter. Although he ruined his best horse in doing it, Solomon Stone overtook the elopers before they had reached the nearest railway station, thrashed the would-be destroyer of his wife into insensibility and, without a single word of reproach to his weeping Louisa, took her back to her father's house; the baby, whom she had taken away with her, he carried back to his deserted home.

Louisa Stone's thirst for adventure was quite

sated by this her first and last disgraceful escapade. From that time on, she devoted herself to the care of her invalid mother until the old lady died, and to the works of charity connected with her father's church.

Many and strenuous were the efforts made by friends and relatives of both families to bring about a reconciliation between the estranged pair, but without avail. Solomon was inexorable; he would have none of her.

Fearing that the young woman would lose her mind in consequence of the separation from her baby, her father, the Rev. Alfred Claybourne, succeeded, after much persuasion, in obtaining Solomon's consent to let the young mother see her child on specified days, amounting to six times a year. Concealed by some tree or shrub, Louisa would often stand for hours on dark nights as near as she dared venture to her husband's house, hoping to get a glimpse of the little one through a window. At the sight of her husband, she would flee like a frightened deer. Although he had always treated her with the utmost kindness, she now stood in terror of him. Such was the life of Louisa Stone.

The wound in Solomon's heart had grown callous and hardened his whole nature. He charged his wrongs, not to the weakness of a

woman, but to the weakness of women. Every daughter of Eve bore a share of the shame and was voted frail, unstable, and faithless in blood and bone. He never spoke to a woman, outside of his own family, if he could decently get around it, and he gave up going to church for no other reason than to avoid speaking to and shaking hands with the numerous women of the congregation.

Solomon's house had a veranda extending across the front and down one side. He was wont to sit on the side veranda on warm afternoons and evenings; it was his favorite retreat. From here there was an unrestricted view of the beautiful winding valley, the river and the wooded hills beyond. It was here Solomon sat with his apples and cider and read his weekly papers; it was here he received his visitors; it was here he rested his iron grey head against the calico pillow and dozed in his easy chair; it was here that his little Alva climbed upon his knee when tired with play, and with slowly closing eyelids, fell asleep in his arms.

The Widow Bodkins owned the farm adjoining Solomon's on the east. She built a house close to his, with a side veranda facing his own, and moved into it. The widow's house was small, not more than half so large as her

neighbor's, and it cut off but little of the view; but Solomon found it impossible longer to enjoy gazing at the beautiful green valley with its tracery of liquid silver, the woods and the purple hills beyond, because the portly figure of the Widow Bodkins, either real or imaginary, always obtruded itself into the southeast corner of the picture, try as he would to shut it out.

There was only a fence, two narrow strips of grass, and a double row of gooseberry bushes between the two houses. The widow was also fond of sitting on her side veranda on warm afternoons, for, although it faced the west, the tall house of her neighbor cast a protecting shade over it.

Whenever Salina Bodkins lifted her black eyes from her knitting and looked over towards Solomon Stone (a woman must look somewhere), he felt as if he had been shot at. They never spoke to one another, and Solomon was kept constantly in a state of irritation because, every now and then in unguarded moments, the widow would glance up suddenly and find his eyes fixed upon her. When Salina first moved into her new house, she saluted her neighbor at different times, with just a touch of the old time courtesy, but as he paid no attention to her by even so much as a nod, she gave it up.

"I'm curious to know what's back of all that," she said one day to her cousin, Mary Bodkins. Salina was charitable to faults and abnormal conditions, because she made a study, in her own crude way, of cause and effect.

"All the queer things we see in folks, Mary, air shadows of other things we can't see till we hunt 'em up. When the sunshine doubles up and jumps into your face all of a sudden, an' a'most puts your eyes out, you can just make up your mind that there's a boy not far away having fun with a piece o' lookin' glass."

"That's so, S'liny, I've allus noticed it," replied Mary. "Nobody could wad up sunshine an' throw it in folk's faces with their bare hands."

Mary Bodkins was an old maid cousin of Salina's, with whom she had lived for more than twenty years. She was a tall, thin old woman with a corpse-like face, and hands that were suggestive of the claws of a bird. She had hip disease and walked with a crutch. Mary had unlimited faith in her cousin, and she rarely ventured an opinion without first testing it in Salina's mental moulds.

Early one morning, three weeks after the Widow Bodkins had moved into her new house, she heard the sound of a hammer and the rip-

ping and splitting of boards. She got up and peeped through the blinds to see what it meant. Solomon Stone was tearing down his veranda. He did it carefully, carried the boards around to the opposite side of the house, and rebuilt it there; then he tore out and boarded up the only window on the first floor looking toward the widow's house.

Solomon's half sister, Lucinda Stone, had lived with him and taken care of his child and the house ever since his wife left him. Some thought Lucinda did wrong to stay with her brother and make everything so easy and comfortable for him; it added, they opined, to the difficulty of bringing about a reconciliation. Lucinda knew her brother's feelings better than any one else, she thought, and she felt sure that a reunion between Solomon and Louisa could never be effected, notwithstanding the young wife's present irreproachable life (of which they made much). Accordingly she could not see that it was her duty to let the baby suffer for the sake of an experiment, or to convince other people that when her brother said anything he meant it.

Solomon's daughter, Charlotte Alvarella Cushman Stone, grew into a beautiful woman. She had the dark, lustrous eyes and shining,

black hair of her mother, and her keen vivacious ways, with the inflexible will and calm but stubborn determination of her father. A profound affection existed between Solomon and his daughter, and they were usually of one mind; but when their wills were opposed and came in contact, "fire flew," as Lucinda expressed it; both were as unyielding as flint.

Lucinda Stone sat on the veranda crocheting. Her niece sat on the steps at her feet. It was a warm afternoon in June, and the air was heavy with the odor of roses that blossomed about the yard in the wildest confusion, and almost covered the long, narrow veranda. Alva was watching a honey bee that was crawling in and out among the petals of a pink rose she held in her fingers, but her thoughts were elsewhere.

"Don't put that rose in your hair, Alva."

The girl looked up quickly into her aunt's face with a shade of displeasure in her eyes.

"Why do you dislike to have me wear flowers, Aunt Lucinda? I rarely touch one to put it on that you do not, at least, look as if you would rather I wouldn't. You certainly don't dislike roses, and I do love them so."

"No, my child, I like all kinds o' flowers; nobody could like 'em better; but I think you

wear too many. You've got two pink moss roses with three buds in your hair now, and three big white ones in your belt. Now, it 'pears to me, that you had ort to be more careful what you wear, Alvarella. Your eyes are so big and dark, and when you git your light dresses on with ribbons and roses, it gives you such a kind of a skittish look, that it a'most scares me, an' you mus' remember, Alva, that 'pretty is as pretty does.' "

Lucinda really meant that her niece looked alarmingly handsome, but she could not have been induced to tell Alva that she looked anything but "skittish" or "flippy." Lucinda dreaded beauty as she would have dreaded a plague. She believed that her brother's happiness had been ruined by the beauty of Alva's mother.

The young girl arose without replying, and tied on her hat. The old lady watched her with anxious eyes.

"So you've decided to go, have you, Alva?"

"Yes," replied her niece, closing her lips firmly.

"But your father, child, think of your poor father and what he said."

"If father could give any good reasons for his objection, Aunt Lucinda, I certainly would

listen to him. I'm not blind, if I am in love; but he can give none. Nathan Overton's name is all the fault father can find in him; and as Nathan was too young to put in an objection when he was christened, I can't see any reason in blaming him or making him suffer for what he can't help. The Overtons do not feel as father thinks they do."

"But, my dear, wait a while an' think it over. Marriage without a father's consent is such an awful thing, Alva. Nathan's a good lookin' enough young man, but you can't always go by looks. You must remember, my child, that, 'It ain't all gold that glitters.' " Old adages were dear to Lucinda's heart. The gainsaying, by later thought, of any old adage, maxim, or proverb, served only to endear it to her, and to increase her efforts in the defense of it by more frequent quotation. To her they were the very essence, the cream of thought, and she was unconsciously proud of the reflected brilliancy they lent to her conversation.

Alva stood facing her aunt. She leaned against a pillar of the veranda. She was winding her narrow pink hat string smoothly around her forefinger.

"I know it, aunt, but it is not his looks. He is good looking, though, isn't he, Aunt Lu-

cinda?" Alva smiled, and over her face swept a flash of rosy warmth, which was instantly dispelled by a look of sadness.

"I'm sorry to disobey father, but I can see no other way, for he will never consent." With an assuring smile, Alva stooped and kissed her aunt's forehead.

"Have no fear, Aunt Lucinda, I have thought of it a great deal, and I feel sure that I am right. Father will see it some day."

"You hain't decided to marry him soon, have you Alva? Do wait a year or two. You might make it all right with your father if you'd wait a while an' coax him."

"A year or two! and keep Nathan waiting all that time, just for father's unreasonable stubbornness? No, indeed. I will not coax any one, even my father, to allow me to do what I know to be right. I am past eighteen, and I am going to be Nathan Overton's wife, notwithstanding that he bears his uncle's name. Now don't you worry one bit about it, Aunt Lucinda; leave it all to me," and Alva, again kissing her aunt tenderly, walked away down the path towards the gate. The pink ribbons on her broad straw hat hung down below her waist.

"Dear me, how over-conceited that girl is! She thinks the hull world's goin' to turn round

jest to suit her. I wish she was more yieldin'. She's jest like a man; there ain't no give to her. What shall I say to Solomon when he comes? Oh dear, oh dear!"

"What be you 'oh dearing' about now, Lucindy Stone? I b'lieve you'd turn the sunshine down any day to find a dark cloud," and Salina Bodkins walked laboriously up the steps and seated herself in Solomon's easy chair.

"She went," replied Lucinda, in a choking voice, "an' I declare I dunno what to do."

"Well, I knew she would," said Salina coolly. "I knew the minute you told me that Solomon had told her not to go, that she would go, and what's more, she'll marry him, too."

"Yes," assented Lucinda with a sob, "she jes' tole me she was goin' to; that's what she's gone to meet him for; to promise to marry him. She's kep' him waitin' this three months, an' she says she won't keep him waitin' no longer. Today was the day sot for her to tell him."

"Well, your brother hain't managed Alva as I should 'a' managed her if she'd 'a' been my girl. You know, Lucindy, that when that child was a leetle mite of a thing, if she was told not to go into the garden, into the garden she went."

"Yes, I know it, S'liny; I know it perfec'ly well. When she wa'n't quite three year old,

Solomon took her out one day and showed her the piny buds, and told her she mustn't pick off a single one—she hadn't happened to notice 'em afore—an' if she did, he'd tie her up. Of all things Alvarella abominated bein' tied up. Well, would anybody believe what that child did? As soon as her father had gone out to his work, she took her little red tin cup, that had printed on it in gilt letters, 'An Obedient Child,' and picked off every one o' the piny buds. When Solomon come in from his work an' sot down to rest, Alva walked up to him an' poured the buds into his hat; then she stood up an' looked at him, right in the eye. She had the empty cup in one hand and the rope in the other, all ready to be tied up. Solomon was that beat, he never said a word. He jes' quietly hung up the rope and rocked her to sleep; then he threw the buds away back of the barn where she wouldn't see 'em.

"Now, I learned a lesson from that, and when the pansies bloomed, I tried a different plan. I took her out and showed 'em to her, an' told her she might pick 'em all off if she wanted to, but if she did, they would die. She loved the pansies, an' used to play around 'em and talk to 'em by the hour, but she never pulled one off. I picked a few one day to put on the tea-

table when I had company, an' she cried herself 'most sick about it. She followed me around a good share of the afternoon, with a needle an' thread, a beggin' of me to sew 'em on again so they wouldn't die.

"You see, S'liny, men don't notice these little things as women do. Alva was always jest as sweet an' lovin' as any child could be when she was managed right, but she won't be druv, an' never would, an' it does seem to me that Solomon had ort to know it. She wouldn't 'a' gone this 'afternoon, I feel sure, if her father hadn't threatened to turn her out o' doors if she did. She's got her trunk all packed up, S'liny, all packed up an' ready." Lucinda again gave way to weeping, interspersed with broken expressions of regret for past sorrows, and dread for those which seemed lying in wait to pounce upon her in the near future. Something about "This vale of tears" attracted Salina's attention.

"Do you know, Lucindy Stone, that you're doing all you can to make this world a vale of tears instead of trying to make it a pleasant place to live in? An' do you know that the reason some folks never can see anything but tears on this earth is because their own eyes are so full of 'em? Most o' the trouble in this world, Lucindy, is homemade. It's wonderful

how the rough places do smooth out when we take our hands off and let the Lord manage things. You're tryin' to do His work, Lucindy Stone, without being asked to."

Lucinda dried her eyes and looked at her friend thoughtfully. "Mebbe you're right, S'liny. I guess there ain't anything more I can do."

"Yes," said Salina, after a moment's thought. "I think there is one more thing you could do. Help me carry Alva's trunk over to my spare room, so if they have trouble to-night she can walk right over to my house, and stay there till she's married. I suppose it won't be long after Nathan finds she's turned out. You see, Lucindy, it would be inconvenient for Alva if her father should take a notion to keep her clothes and—"

"How good an' thoughtful you be, Saliny, I never would 'a' thought of it. It'll look a sight better, too, for her to be over with you than to go to the Overtons. If any one sees her to your house, they might think she'd jest dropped in. I think we'd better take it now, Saliny. 'A stitch in time saves nine,' an' there ain't no tellin' what Solomon 'll do when he finds out she went."

When her father returned, Alva was seated on the veranda, crocheting. There had always

been maintained between the father and daughter a vague code of politeness which they had tacitly framed for themselves, and to which they had always adhered under every trying condition. Solomon walked up the steps towards his daughter hat in hand. According to her custom, Alva rose to her feet at his approach. Her face was pale, and there was a determined look about the little square white chin, but there was no trace of anger or defiance. Solomon regarded her for a moment in silence.

"Did you disobey me, Alvarella?" he asked at last, in a low voice that shook with suppressed emotion.

The young girl stood with one hand resting on the back of her chair. She was in a nervous tremor from head to foot, but she replied in a calm voice and without removing her eyes from her father's face.

"Yes, father, I did. I met Nathan, and—"

"And what? What fool thing did you dare to do? Ungrateful wretch! Child of a renegade! Suckling of an adulteress!" He had grasped his daughter by the wrist, and his words were uttered in a hiss.

Alva sprang back, and with a painful wrench freed her wrist. Her head was thrown back.

her eyes were ablaze with anger, and not a vestige of color remained in her face.

"It's a lie, father, she's not that, and you know it. I've heard from your own lips that she was not. Say what you like of me, but I will not hear you say such things of mother. A shame on you."

Solomon's arms dropped to his sides, and the two stood regarding each other as if suddenly transfixed. Something in her face reminded the old man of the peony buds, and he saw before him a little girl with these same eyes, holding in one hand an empty tin cup and in the other a long, slim rope. He knew now that Alva had made up her mind to take the consequences of her disobedience.

"I may as well tell you all now, father, while we are talking. I promised this afternoon to marry Nathan Overton, and I expect to be his wife within a week—with your consent if you will give it, without it if you will not. If you could show me any good reasons—"

Her father cut her sentence short as if he had not heard a word of what she was saying.

"I've had great hopes for you, Alvarella; you're the only one I've got to care about, the only one I've worked for all these long years. It was for you I've sacrificed everything to save

the farm. Your mother went back on me, an' now you're going to join hands with the enemy, and mix my blood up, whether I will or no, with a family that'd kill me if they dared." There was a moment of dead silence. "I don't know whether I killed old Nathan Overton or not; never shall know; but his folks all think I did. I hear something some of them have said almost every time I go to town. I think I did right to hit him, 'cause he hit me first; but I had no more intention o' killing him than he had o' killing me. I've felt that trouble more than any one knows of. It's not very pleasant to think that mebbe you've flung a man head first into eternity without giving him a minute to think it over. Seems to me, Alvarella, I've had about all I can stand; an' yet you're going to lower me to the very dust by joining hands with my enemies." Solomon was speaking calmly now. "You're safe in insulting me, because you know I wouldn't strike a woman. If you do it, Alvarella,—I want to give you fair warning,—if you marry that man, you're no longer my daughter, and I don't want you to ever come near me whether I'm sick or well, and I forbid you to call me father, or to show yourself at my funeral when I'm dead. I shall be Solomon Stone to you from your marriage day

on, as I am to the rest of the world. Are you going to do it?"

Alva's voice was low but firm.

"I am."

"Then you can go." She turned as if to go into the house. He put his hands on her shoulders and turned her about facing the road.

"Go out there. Out into the street. Out o' my sight." He stretched one long shaking arm towards the road.

Alva slowly picked up her hat that lay on the floor and put it on. She slowly tied the strings under her chin, carefully spreading out the bow with her trembling fingers, keeping, the while, her eyes on those of her father. Every trace of anger and resentment had suddenly fled from both faces, leaving them pale and drawn.

"Do you—meant it—father? Do you—mean to—turn me out?" Alva spoke with difficulty.

"Yes, go, Alva, go quick," and he turned his back to her. Her hand touched his arm with a lingering sweep, and she walked with slow, uneven steps towards the gate. She had a faint hope that he would call her back. She glanced back wistfully over her shoulder, half expecting to see some sign, but he had gone into the house, so Alva Stone closed her father's gate with a touch that was both a caress and a farewell, and walked away.

Salina Bodkins stood at her own gate. She had been standing there ever since she saw Solomon Stone drive home.

"Come here, Alva, you're to come in and stay with me. I know what's happened, and you're to stay right here with me till you're married. Your Aunt Lucindy said so. Your trunk's up stairs, an' your room's all ready."

At the mention of her Aunt Lucinda, tears flowed down Alva's cheeks, but not a muscle of her face moved.

"How good you are, Aunt Salina! And poor Aunt Lucinda, I didn't get to speak to her. She don't even know I'm gone. She's getting supper." Salina laid her arm about Alva's shoulders, and they walked into the house.

Three days later, at four o'clock in the afternoon, Nathan Overton and Alva Stone drove away from Salina Bodkin's gate. Lucinda and Salina stood side by side and watched the bright new buggy as far as they could see it. How pretty Alva looked in her pale blue cashmere and white ribbons! She turned occasionally and waved her hand back at them, smiling.

"Now you stop cryin', Lucindy Stone. You'll make yourself sick. Alva knows what she's about."

"Yes, I mus' stop. Saliny, or I might git

information in the eyes. Louisa hed it after Solomon took the baby away from her. I've hed 'most everything that anybody's ever hed, but if I should git information, I have a feelin' that I shouldn't never git over it. But I dunno as it'd make much diff'rence, I guess I shouldn't be missed. Alva's gone, an' she'll f'git all about me in a little while, an' if I shouldn't never git to see her again in this world, Saliny, tell her—" Lucinda was unable to finish her farewell message. She was sobbing violently.

"Oh, nonsense! I feel as if I could shake you, Lucindy Stone. 'Never git to see her again!' Lucindy, open your eyes if you can, and look over there across the road." Lucinda looked as well as she could through her swollen lids.

"Do you see that red house over there, right square in front of your face?"

"Why of course I do, I ain't quite blind. Anybody c'd see it that's got eyes. But what o' that?" Lucinda felt a little offended.

"Well then, I guess you can see Alva whenever you take the trouble to look out o' your front winders."

"Why, what do you mean, S'liny? Alva ain't goin' to—"

"Yes, she is. Nathan's bought the farm.

Alva told me to tell you 'bout it after they were gone. Nathan paid cash for it, too, four thousand dollars. The Saxes are going to move into town next week, and Nathan and his wife are going to set up housekeeping right in front of your face 'n' eyes." Lucinda could hardly believe her ears, at first; she gazed at Salina, speechless.

"They bought it?" she asked at last.

"Yes."

"An' they're goin' to live right over there acrost the road, in the Saxe house?" Lucinda pointed towards the house, but she kept her eyes on Salina's face.

"Yes."

"How glad I be, Saliny, for I can slip in an' 'tend to her if she's sick er anything, an' when Solomon's gone out to his work, I can jes run over and help her a little bit now an' then about her washin'. Alva, she don't git along very well with washin'; she always rubs blisters on her fingers the fus thing. 'Every dark cloud has a silver linin', don't it, Saliny?" Lucinda's tear-stained face was wreathed in smiles.

"Oh, Nathan won't let her wash, you can be sure of that. He'll most likely hire old Polly Downs to do it for her; she washes for his mother." Lucinda looked disappointed. "Be-

sides," continued Salina, "you're getting most too far along in years to wash, Lucindy."

"Oh, I don't mind it the least bit, Saliny, I've allus been use' to it, an' I'd a good deal rather 'Wear out than rust out.' "

"So would I, Lucindy, ever so much; but I guess there's no danger of—Why, ain't that Solomon coming down the road on that grey horse?"

"Yes, 'tis Solomon, sure enough. I mus' go right to gittin' supper. He's been to town to see about gettin' the mortgage distended to three year more. I hope he's been able to git it done. I'm sure I dunno what Solomon'd do if they should close up on him now right on the heels of Alva gittin' married. (You know, S'liny, trouble never comes singlehanded.) Lawyer Barnes is a good friend o' Solomon's an' he's doin' all he can to git a three-year distention. He was Solomon's lawyer, ye know, when he had that trouble (Lucinda had lowered her voice to a whisper), an' I tell you, S'liny, 'A friend in need is a friend indeed.' "

Four years had gone by since Nathan Overton had moved with his bride into the Saxe house. But for one drawback, they had been four happy, prosperous years. Nathan had

hoped that, living so near together, the hard feeling that existed between his wife and her father would gradually melt away under the softening influence of time. To the intense disappointment of near relatives and friends, the passing years wrought no change between Solomon Stone and his daughter. They often passed one another in the road as if neither knew of the other's existence.

It was the middle of April. It had rained intermittently for ten days. The ground was sodden; rivulets were running here and there, and the permanent streams had overflowed their banks and inundated the low lands. Rain-drops hung trembling on the swollen buds of the apple trees, and dropped lazily down upon the head of Solomon Stone as he hammered away at the stakes of his tent in the orchard close to the road. Salina and Mary Bodkins stood on the porch watching him as he worked in the rain.

"What in the world do you s'pose he's workin' for in all this rain, S'liny?" Salina did not reply at once, and when her thoughts did get to it, Mary had forgotten the question.

"I don't want to say just yet, Mary."

"Say what?"

"Why, what you just asked me. I've made

up my mind, though, what it means, and I'm goin' over to find out." Salina opened her umbrella with that careful, dainty way a few women have, gathered her clean starched dress well up above the hem of her red petticoat, and walked down the path beside the gooseberry bushes till she could see the kitchen window of the Stone house. The window was open, and the short calico curtain was waving outside, flapping like a wet sail.

"Something unusual is up, or Lucindy wouldn't let that curtain fly out in the rain like that," was Salina's mental verdict, as she stepped high through the wet grass.

"Lucindy, Lucindy Stone!" The dripping curtain was pulled in, and the upper half of Lucindy's person was thrust out.

"O, S'liny," she gasped, "do come over here quick. Somethin' awful's happened. The mortgage has closed up on us, an' Solomon declares he'll never sleep another night in this house. We're a-movin'. We're goin' to move right out to-day." Lucinda's voice was broken and plaintive. Salina noticed how pale she was, and how white her hair looked, framed in by the dark casing and the wet, weather-beaten clapboards.

"But you don't have to, Lucindy. I wouldn't move in the rain to please anybody."

"No, we've got till August, but Solomon, he won't stay in this house another night, he says, and you know, S'liny, when Solomon says a thing, he's set on it."

"Well, I'd let him be set on it. I'd let him go out an' set on the fence, if he wanted to, if I was in your place, Lucindy Stone, and I wouldn't stir one step out o' that house till it stops raining and dries up."

"But, S'liny, he's goin' to lock the house up an' take the key down to Squire Simmons this very night, so he says."

"Well, then, Lucindy, you come over and stay with me till the weather clears up. 'Twon't do for you to move into that tent; I see that's what you're planning to do."

"Yes, that's where we're goin'. Solomon says it'll be reel comf'table. I'll come over bimeby, S'liny, an' git a cup o' tea. I feel purt' nigh tuckered out. We've got all the things packed up now that we can't use in the tent, an' L'awyer Barnes is goin' to store 'em for us in his new granary. You see, S'liny, th' orchard, an' that's ten acres, wa'n't in the mortgage, an' jest as soon as Solomon can sell the sheep an' horses, he's goin' to build a cottage right out there under the apple trees where the tent is."

“Well, it’s a shame for a woman o’ your age to have to move into a tent, such weather as this, and you complaining every little damp spell with the rheumatism, too. You’d better make up your mind to stay with me till the house is built. It’d more than likely save you a spell o’ sickness.”

“No, I feel it my duty to stay with Solomon, S’liny; you see he’d feel kind o’ forsook like all alone in a wet tent.”

Alva was greatly disturbed when she found that her father and her Aunt Lucinda were going to move out of their comfortable home into a tent. She tried her best to persuade her aunt to stay with Salina, but for once in her life Lucinda was inflexible.

Solomon laid a few boards down here and there in the tent; between these was fresh wet grass. Some strips of rag carpet were hung up between the two beds, and in front of Lucinda’s bed Solomon had spread down an old buffalo robe.

Rain fell with lazy persistency during the entire night. Solomon kept up a good fire in the cook stove, and the tent, consequently, full of steam from the drying canvas. A little rivulet had broken through and was running

across the floor between the beds. Solomon lay watching it after he woke in the morning.

"Lucinda, you're coughing. Have you taken cold?" She made an effort to reply, but could scarcely raise her voice above a whisper.

"No, I guess not, Solomon," she managed to squeak out, "but I'm terrible hot, an' my hair's jes' wringin' wet. Seems to me you've got a terrible fire, Solomon."

Without replying, Solomon dressed and went to his sister's bed. Before he touched her he saw that she was feverish. He laid his hand on her forehead. "You're sick, Lucinda. I'm afraid it's sleeping in this wet tent. I guess I'd 'a' done better to have left you in the house till it cleared up. I'll ride to town and get the doctor to come over and see what ails you before you get any worse."

Lucinda did her best to expostulate with him, but her voice failed her. In less than five minutes she heard his horse beating the soft mud in a gallop up the road towards the village.

"Lucindy, Lucindy Stone." Salina pushed back the wet curtain, and stood in the tent door. She listened a moment.

"Air you alone, Lucindy?" Salina heard something, mingled with the patter of the rain,

that sounded like the first attempt of a young rooster to crow. Lucinda was making the effort of her life to speak in her natural voice.

"Jest exactly as I expected, Lucindy Stone; you're sick, an' no wonder." Salina stood beside the bed with her hands on her hips. She turned suddenly, after a moment's silent thought, and went to the tent door. She put a plump hand on each side of her mouth and called: "Nathan, Nathan!" The young man appeared in his doorway. Salina made a sweeping inward motion with her arm that said distinctly: "Come over here at once."

"Nathan, Lucindy's sick. She's got a high fever, and her voice is like the croak of an old crow. Can you carry her over to my house?" Lucinda opened her lips to protest, but it was of no use; she was helpless.

"Why, certainly I can, what's to hinder? Roll her up in the blankets, Mrs. Bodkins, and you walk along and hold your umbrella over her. It isn't raining just now, but water is dropping from the trees."

Solomon stood looking at the empty bed when Salina again appeared at the tent door.

"I thought 'twas best, Mr. Stone," she was saying; "this is no place for a woman o' her age even if she was well, which she's far from. You

know as well as I do, Mr. Stone, that your sister has been in poor health, more or less, for two year, an' it'll kill her to live in this wet tent. There's no two ways about it."

Salina stopped for want of breath. She had been talking with only a few slight pauses for five minutes. She was a little nervous, for this was the longest conversation she had ever attempted with her next door neighbor, in all the fifteen years that she had lived in the shadow of his house.

Solomon had not yet spoken. He was looking past his visitor away into the distance. Salina flushed and bit her lips in vexation. She began to wonder, when she saw the far away look in his cold, grey eyes, if he had any intention of replying to her at all. When he did finally turn his eyes upon her own, she felt as if touched by an electric battery. His eyes seemed to breathe and grow warm as they calmly gazed into hers. She involuntarily took a step backward, and rested her hand on the back of a chair. In this short moment of soul communion, the thought came to Salina like a flash of light, that Solomon Stone was misunderstood.

"I presume you're right, Mrs. Bodkins. This is no place for a woman. I didn't think about

her age. In fact, I didn't know till just now, that she'd not been well for two years. She never mentioned it to me."

Salina felt encouraged. Her face brightened. She had made him speak.

"Won't you come over to my house, too, Mr. Stone? Just for a few days, till this wet weather's over. I've got plenty o' room. This ain't a fit place for man or beast. Why, it's soakin' wet, Mr. Stone. You might get some terrible sickness like—like typhoid fever, or th' ager, or—the hives."

"No, thank you, Mrs. Bodkins. This is plenty good enough or me. If you'll let Lucinda stay with you a few days, I'll pay you well for it."

"Pay me! Indeed you will not," said Salina, bristling. She fairly swelled with indignation. "I'm no better 'n I ought to be, Mr. Stone, but I'm not quite mean enough to take pay for letting a friend stay in my house a few days. I didn't suppose you'd come when I asked ye, because you're so stubborn and contrary; but if you change your mind, you're perfectly welcome any minute." And with this she walked away. She rather regretted, a moment later, that she had been so frank, "Still," she

thought to herself, "Maybe he don't know he's contrary, and it may set him to thinking."

It did set him to thinking. No woman had ever before dared to criticize him to his face. He sat in deep thought for some time. Then he spoke low to himself.

"S'pose that's what they all think. Stubborn! Contrary! Uh! Well, it's all the same to me."

The curtain door of the tent was pushed aside, and Alverella stood before her father. She had a tired look, and her face and hair were wet with rain. For a moment neither spoke. He secretly admired her for daring to come.

"Solomon Stone, Nathan and I invite you to stay with us until you get your house built. You will be perfectly welcome. Will you come?" Alva's voice was as always low and sweet. The old man started as if stung.

"How dare you ask me this, Alva?"

"How dare I?" she repeated quickly, as she gazed unflinchingly into his stern face. "I dare, because your blood is in me." She waited a moment for him to speak, but he remained silent.

"When you left mother at grandfather's twenty years ago, you gave her two hundred dollars in money. (Solomon listened intently.)

She has never used a cent of it. It has been upon interest all these years. She says it is not hers, but yours. She feels that she has no right to it. Will you take it? She does not need it. She wished me to ask you this."

"No, I will not. Tell her to make use of it, for it is hers."

"Will you not take half of it, fath—Solomon Stone? It is mother's wish, and you could make good use of it just now; you could build at once."

"No, I will not." Alva took a step backward when the last "no" was spoken, and the curtain dropped between them.

Solomon tied the door open and sat gazing out into a grey, chilly fog that was fast closing in about the tent. He was deep in thought.

Solomon knew that Alva had no hope that he would take the money. He could see it in her face. He remembered that this was the second time Louisa had offered him that money. Both times he was in trouble. When he was arrested for murder, she visited him in prison and begged him to take it for defense. She insisted that it belonged to him; that she had forfeited all right to it. He told her that she certainly had, in a way, but that if he gave it to her, it

was hers. She left him that day feeling more than ever heart-broken.

"What did he say? Oh, what did he say, Alva? Did he say he would take it? Could you coax him to take it?"

"He said just what I would have said in his place, mother, 'no'." Alva pushed the heavy hair back from her forehead with a weary motion. "I knew before I went over there that he would refuse the money and all offers of assistance."

"Poor Solomon! It's all my fault that you're so hard and unhappy. It's my fault that you're alone in that wet tent to-day," and gentle Louisa Stone, whose fault was her weakness, sat gazing with tearful eyes over towards the white tent under the apple tree. "I wish he would go in out of the wet. I can hardly see him through the fog."

"Don't blame yourself so much, mother dear, it isn't all your fault. Father's trouble made a great difference with him."

"You wouldn't believe, Alva, what a good-natured man he used to be, and he was good company too," declared Louisa, between sobs; "he used to sit and tell me stories by the hour; you know I was young then, and so fond of life and excitement."

"Yes, mother, a seventeen year old wife is young."

Three days and nights Solomon lived alone in his wet tent; then the rain ceased and the sun shone forth with welcome warmth.

Lucinda had rheumatic fever, the doctor said, and the first of June found her still in bed.

Solomon had just come in from hoeing his little patch of corn. He hung up his hoe in a tree beside the tent, and pushed aside the curtain door. A child two years old stood at his table, eating. She had a piece of cold meat in one hand and in the other a cooky which she had taken from his table. Her head was covered with a confused mass of silky, brown curls that clung in little rings to her soft, white neck. The two gazed at one another for a moment in silence. The child was the first to speak.

"Baby—eat," said the little one, looking down at her cooky from which one bite had been taken.

"Yes, so I see. What do you want here?" asked the astonished man, in a stern voice.

"Want—here," repeated the child, with a little quiver about her under lip.

"You're going to cry, are you? You'd better go home to your mother." Solomon's voice

softened a little, unconsciously, when he saw two little tears that were not heavy enough to roll down, lying just under the little one's eyes.

"What's the matter with ye, eh?"

"Gampa—scol'—baby."

"Who said I was your grandpa? I'm not your grandpa."

"Not—gampa," echoed the baby, with a stifled sob. Solomon pulled the door curtain aside and motioned her out.

"Come, you run home now." She laid her cooky and piece of meat on the clean plate Solomon had set out for himself, and started for the door, repeating his last words, "Home—now. Home—now."

He watched her until she had crossed the road, and crawled under the gate into her own yard.

"Guess she won't come over here again, the brat. I shall have to tie the door shut after this when I go out." He smiled nevertheless, when he sat down to his dinner and saw the prints of her fingers around the edge of his plate, and that she had taken a bite out of each cooky on the table.

The following day, while Solomon was eating his dinner of bread and milk, cold meat and cheese, two little dimpled hands pulled the door

curtain apart, and a fair baby face was pressed in at the opening.

“Ope—door. Baby—min!” demanded the little visitor, pausing after each word and giving to each the downward inflection. “Ope—door. Baby—min” she repeated.

Solomon went on eating, and pretended not to see her. She gazed at him a full minute without moving or speaking; then she dropped flat upon the ground and crawled in under the canvas. She walked slowly towards the table as if not quite sure of a welcome, until the old man turned suddenly and looked at her with a frown. She stopped short and looked down at her own fingers, with which she began twisting and picking at the front of her apron.

“What did you come for?” demanded Solomon in a stern voice.

“Come—for,” repeated the baby, her lips quivering, as she raised her eyes, brimful of tears, to her grandfather’s face.

“There, there! Don’t cry,” admonished the old man, his face softening; and spreading a piece of bread he sprinkled sugar over it and handed it to her. She began eating it with avidity, the while keeping her tearful eyes fixed on his face.

"You'll choke yourself; you mustn't take such big bites." She tried her best to reply by saying "big bites," but her mouth was too full.

"Gampa—up—up. Take—baby." She approached the old man, after she had crowded the last bit of bread into her mouth, stepped upon the rounds of his chair, and made an effort to climb into his lap. She balanced for a moment over his knee, struggling desperately; then she settled back upon her feet, and gazed into his face in wondering surprise.

"No, I can't take ye. I must go to work. You must go home now."

"Home—now." She repeated, with her clear eyes fixed on his.

"You're a funny baby. You can't talk much."

"Talk—much," said the little one, with a flattered expression.

The man gazed into the child's eyes for a few moments without speaking; then as if communing with his own soul, he said, in a subdued voice: "She's her mother's child over and over, but she has Louisa's eyes."

"Weza—eyes," echoed the child, showing her tiny white teeth in a smile. Solomon laughed aloud.

"You parrot!" he exclaimed, as he caught the baby up in his arms, and even more quickly set her down.

"There, you run home now," he said, a little sternly.

"Home—now," echoed the baby, starting straight for the door. Solomon drew aside the curtain, and stood watching her until he saw her crawl on hands and knees up the doorsteps of her own home, and go in at the open door.

He sat thinking of the baby and how much she resembled Alva; all but her eyes,—they were like Louisa's—just as Louisa's had looked the first time he saw her,—at the Oakland Grove picnic. Louisa was queen of flowers that day; she wore a white dress and a crown of wild roses. She got a rose thorn in one of her fingers and the young men gathered around her, all offering to pick it out for her. Solomon was the farthest away of all, but she looked right past the rest and offered her hand to him. "Mr. Stone, will you try it?" said she. He never forgot the look in her eyes. He told her afterwards it was that one glance that sealed his fate.

As he gazed into the baby's eyes, when she was silently pleading to be taken up, the old

spell stole over him, as a dear memory is sometimes reawakened by the odor of a flower, or a tone of forgotten music.

"Well, this is not hoeing down weeds," said Solomon to himself, as, with a few quick blinks of his eyelids, he shouldered his hoe, and walked away to his little patch of corn.

All day and for days after, a girl in a white dress and a crown of wild roses, followed him everywhere. She moved before him with the persistence of a shadow, as he stepped forward from hill to hill of the tender, waving corn, always holding out to him one little hand. "Mr. Stone, will you try it?" At times she came so near that he would stop suddenly lest he strike the skirt of her dress with the hoe.

"Well, I guess I'm getting to be a blamed fool," he said aloud, pressing the palm of his hand to his hot forehead; then, as if to shut out the vision, he went on hoeing with all his might.

"I was a fool to look at her the other day, when I met her in the road," he mumbled. "Everybody says she's a good woman; leads a good, useful life; but I say she did wrong once, and nobody can convince me—" "Did you ever do anything wrong, Solomon Stone?" and a low voice from, he knew not where, spoke to

his soul. He turned and looked about him; there was no one near.

"And I can never forgive her for that," he continued, "I can never forgive—"

"Our debts as we forgive our debtors."

Once more he straightened up and looked about him. The hot sweat on his forehead seemed suddenly cold. A ground squirrel darted past him and whipped into a hole three hills away. Solomon felt weak; he leaned heavily on his hoe, and stood for a few minutes in deep thought. Then, as if unable to bear any longer the tension of silence, he spoke low to himself:

"She asked me in her letter to forgive her and let her come here and live with me in this tent. She knows I've got nothing for her; that I've lost everything; and yet she wants to come. Now, what for? Just to make me give in, that's all; just to show folks that I forgive her after I said I wouldn't. No, I'll never—" and he struck the hoe forcefully into the ground, "never so long as I live and have my senses—" "Do you hope to be forgiven, Solomon Stone?"

Solomon started as if he had been struck in the face, dropped the hoe, clapped his hands to his head and started staggering towards the tent.

"Come in, Aunt Salina; come right in. Why, what's the matter? Is Aunt Lucinda worse?" asked Alva, anxiously.

"No, but your father, Alva. He's took awful sick. He's got a fit or a sunstroke, for he fell down flat on his face just outside the tent door. Nathan and I both run to him and lifted him up on the bed, and there he lays and don't know a thing."

By this time, the three women were hurrying to the tent, Louisa several strides in advance.

"What do you think is the matter, Aunt Salina?"

"I believe it's a sunstroke, Alva, for I never in my life see a man work as that man has worked this afternoon, and it's too hot for any one to hoe corn today, let alone a man as old as he is. Mary and I have been watching him from the window, and that's how I come to see him staggerin' along and finally fall down."

"I don't suppose he'll allow us to do anything for him," said Alva, sadly.

"Oh, he don't know anything now, Alva, and when he comes to, if he objects, why you've done your duty, and that's all you can do."

"What is it, Nathan? What ails father?" asked the young wife stepping toward her husband who had just come out of the tent.

"I don't know, Alva, he seems overheated. Keep cold water on his head. I'm going after the doctor," and Nathan hurried away.

For more than a week, Solomon Stone was, to all appearances, delirious. The first two days he was not conscious of the real presence of his wife, but only as he saw her in the corn field with her black hair crowned with wild roses, and her thin white dress waving in the wind. He realized, at times, the illusion, but in his weakness he clung to it. At other moments he was conscious of the presence of the real Louisa with white hair and black dress. He closed his eyes and feigned sleep whenever she bent over him, smoothed his brow or tucked the sheet ever so softly about his shoulders. He knew now that it was her breath he had felt on his forehead, her cool fingers on his wrist. He knew it was Alva who prepared the broths and brought them to the tent door, the strong arms of Nathan that lifted him about, but he did not wish them to know that he knew it, for he had no longer either the physical power or the strength of will to protest.

It was Sunday afternoon. A light rain had freshened the air, and an agreeable breeze swayed gently the loose canvas. Solomon listened to the birds as they sang and quarreled

in the branches that hung low over his head. He could hear the whirr of their wings as they flew from branch to branch, and the spasmodic breathing of the cow as she grazed in the shade close to the head of his bed. He could hear, now and then, the soft swish of a woman's dress. He lay with his face to the wall. These were his thoughts: "Louisa thinks I'll forgive her after this because she's done so much for me. She'll be disappointed when she finds that she's had all her trouble for nothing. They think they'll down me now while I'm sick and helpless. I'll show 'em they can't. Alva's helping her mother along. They want to make me give in. I hate to make Louisa feel bad; she must be about tired out, but it's her own fault. She ought to know by this time that I meant it when I told her fifteen years ago, when her father died, that I could never forget nor forgive her."

"Forgive her, forgive her, forgive her," rang in his dizzy brain, like a chant of far distant music. His soul seemed to vibrate and swing with the strains of it, "forgive her, forgive her, forgive her."

He moved uneasily as if irritated. A soft hand touched his forehead, and a sweet calm stole over him.

"This must come to an end," was the mental resolution of the sick man. "It's all very well to lie here and be cared for and petted like a baby, but I've roughed it now for twenty years without petting, and I'm going to rough it the rest o' the way down the hill. 'Twon't be far now. Strange how the touch of her hand affects me after all she's done, and after so many years. This must end now, while I can end it."

Solomon spoke up in a natural voice: "Lucindy, where are you?" He heard the rustle of skirts, a soft step, then the sound of some one running outside.

"Salina, oh, Salina!" and Louisa Stone sank down panting on the door-step. "He's come to. Can't you go right over? And whatever you do, don't let him know I've been there; he'd be furious, I know he would. Go quickly, Salina."

"Lucindy ain't quite well enough to come over today, Mr. Stone, but I think she will be in a few days."

"She's getting better, is she?"

"Oh, yes, she's much better. Fever's all gone, but she's weak. Can't stan' on her feet to save her life. You're looking a good deal

better today, Mr. Stone. Guess you're goin' to get right along now."

"How long have I been down here, Mrs. Bodkins?"

"This is the tenth day; but I calculate you'll be up an' around in two or three days more."

"I guess I can go to sleep now, Mrs. Bodkins. I've been awake a long time."

"All right, Mr. Stone, I'll come over again bimeby."

"Lucindy Stone, your brother is a different man. I can't just tell what it is, but he's changed. His face has lost a good deal of that hard look. Not all of it, but some of it."

"Well, I hope he is," said Lucinda, in a doubtful tone. "He ain't much of a han' to change, as you know, S'liny, an' I'm afraid that your 'wish is father to your thought.'"

"No, it is not, Lucindy. I tell you there's a change." Both sat silent for a few minutes, each following her own line of thought.

"Lucindy, do you suppose he knows Louisa's been there taking care of him?"

"I don't b'lieve he does, S'liny. Louisa thinks he don't, an' I believe he'd a sent her off if he'd knowed she was there."

"I don't agree with you, Lucindy; I believe

he knows she's been there. He's just as raytional as I am this minute, and Louisa says he has had no fever for three days. Old Polly Downs told me last night that she didn't believe he'd been out of his head half the time. Polly ought to know for she's used to sickness, and she's been there a good share of every day. Another thing I'm sure of, Lucindy." Salina sat gazing into the distance, lost in thought. Lucinda sat waiting with her eyes fixed on Salina; finally she spoke up a little impatiently.

"I'd reely like to know, S'liny, if you'd jest as lives tell me, what it is you're so sure about."

"I'm sure that your brother thinks the world o' that baby. She came into the tent while I was there, just a little while ago, with her little dress skirt full of pink tea roses. She walked right up to the bed, and laid them all, one by one, around Solomon's head, as if she was framing it. Then she held out one little finger towards him and said, in her baby way: 'Gampa—f'ower—hurt—baby.'

"Solomon didn't say a word, but I shall never forget the look in his face, and if I ever told the truth in my life, Lucindy Stone, his eyes filled up with tears. He turned his face to the wall, an' I just walked out an' come home to spare his feelin's."

"Well, he must think a good deal of her, if he shed tears jes' b'cause she pricked her finger. I can't see through it, nohow. We're told to prove all things an' hol' fast that which is good, S'liny, but I can't see, for my part how we're ever goin' to prove that."

For three days and nights, a fiercer battle than was ever fought with powder and ball raged in the heart of Solomon Stone. Two powerful elements in his nature, that for weeks had been drawing nearer and nearer together, engaged at last in deadly combat. He lay alone in his tent refusing all assistance; neither food nor medicine passed his lips. How terrible the struggle had been was told by the sunken eyes and the deepened lines in his strong face. He stood in the tent door leaning on the back of a chair. His voice was very weak.

"Polly, I wish you'd move my chair out in front of the tent, right in the middle of that heavy tree shade. It's terribly hot in here; there isn't a breath of air stirring."

"How'll that do, Mr. Stone?"

"Turn the chair the other way, Polly; I don't want to have to look back into the tent; I'm tired enough o' that."

"How is this, Mr. Stone?"

"All right, now you can go home. I shall be able to get back to bed alone."

Solomon had no sooner leaned back in his chair than he saw Salina Bodkins coming towards him carrying a bowl of broth.

"I really wish you wouldn't put yourself to so much trouble, Mrs. Bodkins. It's too bad. I've never done anything for you."

"It'd trouble me a great deal more not to do anything for you, Mr. Stone, than to do a little once in a while; so you see, though it has the look of kindness, it's mostly selfishness. What are neighbors for, anyway, Mr. Stone, if we're not to help one another?"

"Well," said Solomon, after a moments thought, "I can't remember of ever doing anything for my neighbors."

"Well, then, it's about time you did do something, Mr. Stone. We ain't put here to live for ourselves alone. We're meant to help one another whenever it's needful, but it takes some folks a long time to find it out." Silence reigned for a few moments. Solomon gazed at the woman before him with a look of admiration mingled with curiosity. No other woman had ever dared so much.

"I guess you haven't a very good opinion o'

me, Mrs. Bodkins; I don't suppose any of the neighbors have. I presume you all think I'm a cold, hard-hearted man, an' I don't know but I am. I've had enough to make me so." It was the first time Solomon had ever spoken of his trouble to any one but Alva.

"I can't say what the neighbors think, Mr. Stone, I never pay much attention when my neighbors find fault with one another, but I know what I think."

"Well, what do you think, Mrs. Bodkins? I should really like to know," and Solomon looked up into her face, inquiringly.

"I think," said she, after a long pause, "that you are not half so hard-hearted as you imagine you are, and as you try to be. You think it shows strength to be stubborn and unforgiving, but it's a mistake; it shows weakness. The meanest soul in the world can pity himself an' nurse his trouble; he gets a sort of enjoyment out of it. It's awful easy, too; it ain't necessary to have any particular talent, nor anything but the commonest brains; in fact, Mr. Stone, it ain't necessary to have much of anything but a selfish disposition."

Solomon sat silent, with firmly compressed lips.

"I sometimes wonder, Mr. Stone, when I see you around here alone, growing more gloomy and sour every year, if it's going to take you the whole of your lifetime to find out, that it takes a better man to forgive than it does to hold a grudge."

Salina's face flushed as she finished speaking.

"Now, I hope I hain't said too much, Mr. Stone."

"No, Mrs. Bodkins. You've done right. I like the truth, and I hate deceit."

A sound of wheels drew their attention to the road. A cloud of dust was rolling by with the doctor's gig in the midst of it. He drove up to Nathan Overton's, hitched his horse, and went in.

"Who's sick over there, Mrs. Bodkins?" Salina gazed abstractedly at the Overton house for a few moments without replying, then she spoke as if to herself.

"I shouldn't wonder if she didn't get up again. She's overdone, and she ain't strong anyway."

"Whom do you mean, Louisa?"

"Yes, she's awful sick. I set up with her all last night."

After Salina had gone, Solomon sat in deep

thought till the tree shadows stretched away across the orchard and the western sky turned red. The muscles in his face worked, and the veins stood out on his forehead. His grey head was bent and rested on one hand. A light sound on the grass, like the sweep of a sparrow's wing, and Baby Overton announced that she had arrived. She walked slowly up to Solomon, between his knees, and stepped upon the rounds of his chair.

"Did you come over to see grandpa, baby?"

"Tee—gampa." And a happy smile lit up her face. The old man gazed for a moment unrestrainedly into the clear innocent eyes upturned to his, then he lifted the little one to his knee.

"Baby, grandpa is a hard, cross old man. He has been hard and cold for so many years, that he came near forgetting how to love, and he wonders how any one can love him, but I guess they do—I guess they do."

The child gazed into his misty eyes with a look of unquestioning sympathy; then she threw her arms around his neck and hugged him with all her strength. The remaining fragments of icy crust about Solomon Stone's heart melted away. Warm blood coursed

through his veins with the speed of youth, as the half-formed resolution in his mind became a definite and fixed purpose.

"Baby, grandpa is going over to see grandma, will baby help grandpa walk?"

"Gampa—walk," she repeated, slipping down from his lap.

"Get grandpa's cane, then. There it is leaning up against the tent. Bring it here, baby, bring it right here to grandpa, and don't fall over the boards. Now, we'll go and see grandma."

"Tee—gamma." And grasping one of the old man's fingers, she started forward with a hard pull.

"Not quite so fast, little one; grandpa can't walk very fast, he must go very slow, baby, very slow."

When they reached the gate, the little girl dropped down and crawled through under it, as was her custom, and unlatched it from the inside. The old man, pale and weak, walked slowly through, questioning as he looked up the long narrow path, whether his strength would hold out till he reached the house.

Alva saw them coming and ran down to meet them. Her face showed neither surprise nor pleasure. No one could have told by her

expression that anything unusual was taking place.

"Put your arm on my shoulder, father," said she in a low, firm voice. The old man did as she bade him, and the three moved slowly towards the house. It was as if the four years just passed had never been.

"S'liny, come here quick. There's something or other the matter with Mary. She's dropped her crutch an' fell down, an' I can't git to her to save my life. You know I can't stan' on my feet." Lucinda was propped up in a rocking chair. She leaned over to one side and pounded on the cellar door.

"Hurry up, S'liny; she's down on her knees starin' out o' the winder, an' she won't answer when I speak to her."

Salina rushed up the cellarway, panting. She stopped in the middle of the room, looking from the crutch that lay at her feet to Mary, and back again.

She was alarmed, for Mary had not taken a step without her crutch for twenty-five years. Salina looked at Lucinda questioningly. Lucinda spoke low, pointing to the crutch.

"She walked from it over to the winder."

"Without it?"

"Yes, without it."

Salina turned pale. Mary still knelt at the window and was gazing out as if transfixed. Salina tried to speak naturally, but her voice sounded a little weak.

"Mary, Mary Bodkins, what does ail you? What be you a-doin' there?"

Mary kept her eyes glued to the window.

"S'liny, I wish you and Lucindy Stone would come here and tell me if there's anything the matter with me. Do I see Solomon Stone walkin' up that path with Alva and the baby, or don't I see him? If I don't, then I'm goin' to be awful sick, an' you'd better send right straight off for the doctor."

Before Mary had ceased speaking, two more faces with wide open eyes and parted lips were beside hers close to the window.

"'Praise God from whom all blessin's flow.'" exclaimed Salina, raising her arms. Tears streamed down three smiling faces, and two handkerchiefs and the corner of Salina's gingham apron were brought into use.

"Oh, I'm so glad and so thankful," exclaimed Lucinda, between sobs, as she paced back and forth with measured steps, gently wringing her hands.

“‘All things come to them that wait,’ as Elder White said las’ Sunday, Saliny, ‘all things come to them that wait.’ ”

Salina and Mary were gazing at Lucinda in open mouthed amazement.

“Lucindy Stone, you’re a-walkin’. Set down this minute. You know you can’t bear your weight on your feet.”

Lucinda dropped into a chair.

“How true it is, Saliny,” she went on, wiping her red eyes, that ‘All things work together for good to them that love—.’ ”

“Why, of course they do, Lucindy Stone, I’ve always told you so, but it does take some folks forever to find it out.”

PATIENCE AND PRUDENCE

PATIENCE AND PRUDENCE

Old John Tolbert knew exactly what he was about when he sold his little farm, bought with the money a five-acre lot in the edge of Pepperton, fenced it, divided it in halves by running a tight board fence through the middle from the road back, and built on each half a snug little three-room cottage for each of his two daughters, Patience and Prudence.

There was enough money left after the houses were finished and furnished to give them two coats of paint or dig cellars under them; to do both was out of the question. After weeks of arguing, sparring, and calculating, the cause of the cellars won, much against the will and pleasure of Patience, whose vanity was her sister's *bête noir*.

On one of the lots there was a good well; on the other, two fine cherry trees. The old man's will provided that whichever of the girls occupied the well-less lot, should have the right to draw water at her sister's curb; accordingly, a gate was cut in the fence beside the well.

The day after the father's funeral the will was read, giving Prudence the lot with the well, and Patience the one with the cherry trees, stipulating that Patience should allow her sister to have, every season, half the cherries from the tree in the corner. The winter following the old man's death, the wind broke off the larger part of the tree, and what was left yielded only a quart or two of fruit each season.

"Whatever be you a-doin' up there, Prudence Tolbert? You'll fall and break yer neck."

"No, I sha'n't fall, nuther; I'm hangin' onto a limb."

"What be ye puttin' yer bunnit an' shawl up there fur?"

"Why, I put it up to scare the birds away. I sha'n't git a cherry this year; they're a-eatin' of 'em jest as fast as they git ripe. I'm takin' it down now; it don't do no good. I put 't up airly this mornin' 'fore you was up, an' when I come out after breakfus', there was a sassy robin settin' right on the crown o' my bunnit singin' ter split his throat. I throwed a club at 'im an' most hit 'im, but he flew over inter your tree; that's him singin' now. I b'lieve he's jest a-doin' of it to be sassy; the little rascal, I'd like ter wring his neck." And Prudence handed down what looked like an immense rag doll to

her sister, then felt her way cautiously down from the fence under the tree.

"Why, yer bunnit rim's all broke off, Prudence; how'd ye do it?"

"Why, I hit it with the club, I guess, when I threw it at that nasty robin. Yes, it's spiled, ain't it? Now I shell hev ter wear my best one whether 't rains or shines. Goodness me! but it's hot up in that tree," and Prudence wiped her damp face on the corner of her apron.

At the time of the father's death the girls were thirty-five and unmarried. As Prudence was supposed to be her sister's senior by fifteen minutes, Patience had always accorded to her the deference due to superior knowledge and longer experience.

It was the middle of July. Prudence was standing at the well. She had just drawn a bucket of water. She straightened her tall, lean figure, threw her nose into the air, and with dilated nostrils gave a few quick sniffs.

"Goodness me! somethin's burnin'. I do b'lieve it's Patience's raspberry jam. Patience! Patience Tolbert! Where on airth be ye?" and Prudence, running into her sister's kitchen, lifted the burning jam from the stove, then went round to the front of the house, where she found her, blissfully ignorant of the calamity,

busy tying a rose bush to a stake she had just driven into the ground. Prudence's black eyes were snapping with excitement. She towered above the bent figure, her face a picture of scorn.

Patience rose slowly to her feet, looking inquiringly into her sister's face.

"What is it, Prudence?—What's the—What hev I—" her voice died in a murmur. Prudence measured the rose bush, then her sister, with a look of concentrated contempt, as if in doubt which of the two were the more to be despised. Her long sharp nose was drawn, and her thin lips so compressed that only a blue line of each was visible.

"If I was sech a fool as you be, Patience Tolbert, I'd go an' drown myself, that's what I'd do." Then she turned, holding her skirts very high, and strode through the unmown grass back to the well, her heels parting company with her low slippers at each step.

Patience stood still, looking after her, until she had carried the pail of water into the house. Patience was neither frightened, surprised, nor hurt; she was only wondering what Prudence was so "mad" about.

"I guess 't mus' be b'cause Miss Jennings staid to supper with me las' night; I noticed she

wouldn't speak when I was hangin' out the clothes this mornin', an' I though 'twas b'cause I got mine on the line first; that allus did make 'er 'mad.' ” Then she stooped down to finish tying up the rose bush. Suddenly, with a frightened look, she sprang erect and sniffed the air; then darted round the house and in at the back door.

“Oh! my jam, my jam! It's burnin' up.”

“Oh, no, it ain't, it's already burnt up,” came in a tantalizing voice from over the fence.

“If you'd ruther 'tend to rose bushes than yer jam, why, ye kin do it—'t ain't none o' my business; but I ain't goin' to divide mine with ye as I did my black currant preserves last year, an' ye needn't a-look for it.”

Prudence had walked back to the well under pretense of taking in the clean dish towels which hung on a gooseberry bush beside the gate, but really for the purpose of firing a few more volleys into her sister's smoking kitchen. She loved to force down the unwilling throats of her friends, for their own good, the very dregs of the benefits of experience.

“I ain't lookin' fer ye to divide; your'n's too thick anyway,” murmured Patience, well aware that her speech was a fatal stab to peace for a week at least. She had carried the kettle out,

set it on the ground in front of the kitchen door and stood looking at it.

"There ain't no need o' takin' on so about it, Prudence; I ain't so terrible fond o' raspberry jam as I use ter be—I'm goin' to make some out o' gooseberries—they're reel good when comp'ny comes."

"But ye don't like 'em yerself; ye sold all ye had, last year."

"I know I did, but I—I like 'em better 'n I use' ter."

No sign of recognition passed between the two sisters after this conversation until the following Sunday. The presiding elder was going to preach, and everybody who ever went to meeting turned out. All sorts and conditions of teams and vehicles from the surrounding country filled the church grounds. The Tolbert girls attended service at least once every Sunday. In obedience to a suggestive nod from the minister, Patience usually started the hymns. Old Father Hartman, a gray-haired, round-shouldered man with gold glasses had done it formerly; but his voice was beginning to tremble, for he was well past his three-score years and ten. Besides he had such a habit of dropping the last word of every line, and beginning the next one before the rest of

the congregation could possibly catch breath, that it annoyed the new minister, Brother Jones from Boston, who was, in the opinion of some of the older members, a shade too fastidious.

Patience had a clear, full, sweet, uncultivated soprano voice, of which Prudence was very proud, and as a result, the weekly sins (whether real or imaginary) of Patience against her sister were all swallowed up each Sunday morning, in the clear, sweet tones of her singing voice.

The last ringing of the church bell for morning services had just begun when Prudence closed her gate behind her and started for meeting. She had picked a little bunch of spearmint and rolled it up in her handkerchief to scent it. She had seen from her window that Patience had her bonnet and shawl on, and had started towards the door before she herself had ventured out. Her tall, prim figure rigidly erect, she walked past her sister's gate with her nose in the air, not so much as turning her head to see if she was coming. Prudence had no notion, however, of going in to meeting without Patience. It would be sure to be remarked upon—everybody would know they had quarreled. Moreover, Prudence was not half so angry as she wished to be; she was short of fuel for her wrath. It seemed to her undignified to

let anger wear itself away; so she nursed it, fanning the embers of resentment by carrying on imaginary conversations with her sister, in which Patience always grossly insulted and abused her, until Prudence really came to believe her own anger righteous.

Patience was in no hurry. She had stopped to pick a few roses, knowing exactly the state of her sister's mind and feelings. She knew Prudence would invent some excuse to wait.

Prudence took off her gloves and untied one of her shoes. "Feels loose," she mumbled to herself, then she re-tied it. She didn't finish until Patience had passed her a little. She wanted to be sure that Patience should see the shoe and the tying. By the time Prudence rose up, her sister was a few feet ahead of her. Patience halted to pull a "stick-tight" off her dress skirt, so the two came into line and moved on together. They walked in the middle of the road because there was no sidewalk except near the church, and the weeds beside the road were dusty. Prudence held her dress well up in front with one hand, and carried her hymn-book and turkey-tail fan in the other. She wore a black dress, a black straw bonnet trimmed with black ribbon and a bunch of purple flowers. The fringe on the bottom of her black silk cape

flapped briskly back and forth as she walked. It seemed to Patience that it always flapped a little more spitefully going to meeting than on the way home; it was an unerring reflection of its wearer's moods.

Patience glanced furtively at her now and then, the dimples in the corners of her mouth deepening. She was not quite so tall as Prudence, but fairer. She wore a brown Irish poplin gown, a brown straw bonnet with yellow roses, and a black silk shawl with wide knotted fringe. It kept slipping off her shoulders; but she did not mind; she rather liked the careless effect. She carried a brown satin parasol which had been her mother's and of which she was for that reason very "choice." The handle was a horse's head carved in ivory; the ornament on top had also been of carved ivory, but it was broken off close down to the silk.

As the two sisters walked up the meeting-house steps, Prudence took a little nibble of the dried sweet-flag root she always carried in her pocket. Patience fell back a little behind her, and fastened one of the pink roses she carried to the bosom of her dress. She pretended to herself to hope that Prudence would not notice it. The consciousness of her own vanity, and what the brothers and sisters might think of

such a display, deepened the pink in her cheeks as she walked up the aisle holding her chin a trifle higher than was her wont. There was a spice of defiance in her bearing—a mute defense of her love for the beautiful.

The hymn was announced with the usual nod to Patience, and her voice rang out clear and sweet: "Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease." Everybody looked at her. They had never heard her sing so well before. Nobody knew why it was; she herself did not know; but it was her unconscious defense of the rose in her dress. The rigidity of Prudence at once relaxed. After they had reseated themselves, she moved nearer to Patience until their arms touched; then she smelt of the spearmint in her handkerchief, gave a little sigh of contentment, and riveted her eyes piously upon the minister. Patience knew that in her sister's book of reckoning, her sins were once more blotted out.

The text chosen was from Second Timothy, the ninth verse: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel * * * Not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

Patience was ill at ease throughout the service. She felt that she was the particular target for every dart hurled from the pulpit at the vanity of her sex. If she had been decked with garlands of roses from head to foot and stood up for a flower sign, she could not have felt more conspicuous.

After the service, everyone went directly outside,—it was very warm in the church,—and stood on and about the wide steps talking and shaking hands.

The men wiped their foreheads and fanned themselves with their straw hats, and the women drew their thin wraps about their shoulders, for it was not fashionable in Pepperton to go without any kind of a wrap, no matter how hot the weather was.

When she thought no one was noticing her, Patience drew her shawl closely about her shoulders, then pulled the rose from the bosom of her dress and dropped it by her side. The heat had made it droop a little; that was why, she decided, that she did not wish to wear it any longer. Brother Jones from Boston, as he was usually called by the church members, picked up the rose, after most of the congregation had dispersed, laid it against his vest and

buttoned his coat over it. He knew it was the one Patience had worn; he saw her drop it. He was fond of flowers, especially of roses.

"How did ye like the sermon?" asked Prudence as they were walking homewards.

"Well enough," replied Patience a little tartly, for she felt that there was something of a challenge in the question. She failed to consider, in her perturbed state, that her sister rarely failed to ask the same question, the sermon usually furnishing the topic of conversation on their homeward walk.

"Well, there ain't no need o' bein' so snappy," replied Prudence, drawing herself up. She was at least an inch taller when she was angry. It seemed to have an elongating effect which she couldn't help. "You wouldn't 'a' felt it so if you hadn't been overdressed—it's the hit bird that allus flutters, an' you wouldn't 'a' had no call to flutter, if you'd take yer elder sister's advice an' dress as a woman o' your age, that pretends ter be pious, had ortal dress," and Prudence swept majestically past her sister's gate and went in at her own. She halted as she reached the door-step, and looked at Patience, who had stopped among her roses.

"I invited Brother Jones to tea tomorrer afternoon—I told 'im you'd be over to my

house. Bring yer crochet work along; it does look so shiftless to set an' do nothin'." Then she went into the house.

Patience looked a moment at the closed door that had swallowed up the long, gaunt figure of her sister. "I'll git my washin' out first, to-morrer, that 's what I'll do, Prude Tolbert," and she drew her lips into a little pucker, always a sign of decision and determination.

The next morning at eight o'clock, Patience was hanging out her clothes. She glanced cautiously over the sheet she was pinning to the line, and saw through her sister's window that her tall form was bent over the steaming suds and that the boiler was still on the stove. Patience laughed behind the sheet, till she dropped the clothes-pin she held in her mouth. "Poor Prudence," she finally sighed, "I wouldn't have such a temper for the world. But she was allus so, father said she was born mad, poor Prude! It mus' be dretful uncomfortable for 'er. There air times when she ain't mad, but she wouldn't hev any one find it out fer the world. She seems to enjoy feelin' that she's bein' trod on."

Prudence finished her washing and left the clothes in the rinse water. She met Patience at the well when she went after the last pail of water to pour over them.

"You ain't got yer close out yet, Prudence; ye must hev a big wash today," remarked the tantalizing Patience.

"Got done a good while ago—all but the towels. I ain't a goin' ter put 'em out till the sun shines. Your'n won't look nohow. Your close is lookin' dretful gray lately, Patience, you'd orter rub 'em longer."

At twelve o'clock, feeling that by her seeming indifference she had shorn Patience of her laurels, Prudence hung out her clothes. Patience came out with her basket to take in the last of the thick pieces; the rest were all dry.

"Seems to me it looks a little brighter 'n it did," said Prudence, as she shook out a wet pillow-case, looking inquiringly up at the sky.

"Yes, I dunno but 't does. How white your close do look, Prudence. I b'lieve it's a good thing to let 'em soak a spell in rench water."

Patience did not smile; she would not have dared; the dimples in her cheeks only deepened a little.

"Ye got any cucumbers big enough to eat yet, Patience?"

"No, an' I don't see any on the vines either; mine ain't done very well this year."

"I picked four big ones off'm mine las' night; you kin hev one or two of 'em; I sha'n't want 'em all."

It was three o'clock. Prudence had touched up here and there her always immaculate sitting-room after she finished her kitchen work; but as she was every minute expecting Brother Jones, she walked about, wiping imaginary specks of dust from the furniture, smoothing the tidies and giving a few extra little pats to the cushion in the easy chair by the window where she expected him to sit. The windows and doors were all open, and a faint breeze stirred gently the thin muslin curtains.

"Good afternoon, Brother Jones, come right in an' take a chair,—this chair,—take this chair, Brother Jones," and Prudence laid her hand on the back of the big stuffed chair by the window.

"No, thank you, Sister Tolbert, I'll just sit right down here in the doorway where it'll be cool. Very warm, isn't it?" and he sat down on a carpet-covered soap box that Prudence used for a footstool.

Her sallow face rarely showed color; one would never have supposed, from her looks, that the blood ever ventured above her collar bone; but when the minister coolly seated himself on the soap box, her face actually turned pink. For a man of his calling to take such a seat in her house was too much for her ideas of propriety. She inwardly rejoiced, however, that he was ignorant of the truth, and she wondered

if she was doing right in allowing him to remain in ignorance. She resolved not to enlighten him, and hoped that none of the church members would ever find it out. While these thoughts were passing through her mind, she sat in the attitude of an intent listener, with her hands folded primly in her lap.

“Do you not find it so, Sister Tolbert?”

Prudence had heard nothing but the question, which clearly pointed to some previous observation.

“Well, reely, brother, I—I didn’t quite ketch yer meanin’,” and she put on a studious expression, leaning a little forward.

“Why, that the weather is warmer than it was at this time last year, Sister Tolbert.”

“Yes, I dunno but ’tis. You’re quite right, brother, ’tis warmer ’n ’twas last year.”

As the hour between three and four wore away, Prudence gradually forgot the soap box, and was talking quite in her accustomed strain. She used a little different tone from ordinary when speaking to ministers. She thought their calling deserved it. She used the same tone in class-meeting; some of the young scoffers of Pepperton whom she had frequently chased out of her watermelon patch, called it her Sunday voice.

"I reely wish you'd hev a good ser'us talk with 'er, Brother Jones," Prudence was saying "It don't do no good for me to say anything, she's so sot, Patience is. Now you noticed that pink rose she wore pinned to 'er dress Sunday, didn't ye?" As at this moment Brother Jones had the rose in his coat pocket, a wave of guilty color swept over his face. But he meant to be brave and say a word in defense of the absent, erring sister. So he said, as he looked down at his fingers, carefully matching the ends together, "I—I did notice the rose, and I must say that I thought it looked—it looked—" very pretty, he was going to say, but Prudence cut him short

"Yes, yes, I intirely agree with you, Brother Jones. Sech display, right in meetin', right in the face of a minister, is not becomin' in a woman o' her age an' perfession. I do wish you'd go over to her house some day soon an' pray an' wrestle with 'er an' convince 'er if ye kin that she'd orter dress more modest. But don't mention it afore me, brother. It 'ud only ag'avate 'er; whenever I, her own sister, speak to 'er on the subjick of 'er vanity—"

The sentence was cut short by an apparition in blue gingham and white embroidery in the doorway. Patience, in a spirit of defiance, had

picked a fresh pink rose and tucked it in her belt. Prudence glanced at her, then significantly at the minister, with a look that plainly said, "There now, you see it's just as I told you, she is determined to make herself pretty."

Patience sat in the rocker and crocheted, leaving the conversation mostly to her sister and the minister. Their subjects were principally theological, the different modes of baptism receiving the lion's share of attention. Prudence, though a staunch Methodist, never had believed in sprinkling. She considered it a slipshod, cross lot, inexcusable way of evading the Lord's commands, adopted solely to avoid getting wet all over.

At five o'clock Prudence went out into the kitchen to make the tea. She put on her best china and glass, her fine table cloth, and her mother's pewter teapot, which was never used except when company came; she always kept it wrapped up in tissue paper. She put on the table some thin slices of cold ham, some little cubes of cheese, bread and butter, tea, cake, and raspberry jam.

"Tea's all ready now," said Prudence, as she came back into the sitting-room. She noticed that Patience bent over her work and was blushing.

"He must 'a' spoke to 'er a'ready on the subjick of 'er vanity," thought she. "The dear, good man! He means to do his duty, Brother Jones does."

"Jest walk right out, Brother Jones," she continued in a softened voice, "Come, Patience, dear."

Less weighty topics were indulged in during tea; the ways and means of providing a new carpet for the pulpit floor; charity families; the severe illness of one of the oldest and wealthiest members, and the best way to raise potatoes. Brother Jones was of the opinion that if we expect to reap as we sow, we should plant the largest, choicest potatoes. Prudence considered his method a needless waste, but as it accorded otherwise with her religious creed and the opinion of a minister, she decided on the spot, that in future she would plant as she would reap—so far as her potatoes were concerned. Further she unhappily did not consider. Prudence noticed that her sister took no jam when it was passed. She felt uncomfortable at this, and passed it again, with no better result. Finally she set it down beside her sister's plate. But Patience was eating cheese with her bread—she didn't care for any jam.

Prudence was a shade more gentle to her

sister during the week following. She felt that she had taken an advantage of Patience, deceived her; and although Prudence was bruising to heal, she was sure that the end justified the means. The consciousness of her own deception softened her. She had decided that when the minister called on Patience she would take no notice of it whatever. She did not wish to irritate her erring sister while she was being wrested from the toils of her besetting sin.

On the Wednesday afternoon following his visit to Prudence, the minister called on Patience. From a little opening in the blind, Prudence kept watch. The houses were so close together that she could hear their voices, but was able to distinguish only a word now and then. She could see her sister's profile against the lace curtain—another mark of her unholy pride—and she noticed that her face had grown serious; Patience had stopped crocheting and was leaning back in her chair. The minister sat in the rocker, and she could see him move gently back and forth, swaying the fringed tidy that hung over the back of his chair. She wished he would not rock while he talked to Patience. It seemed to her that it must detract somewhat from the seriousness of his words.

"I do wonder how she'll take it? I hope he'll mention the lace curtains an' that long wool one she's got hung up fer a bedroom door. I wonder what poor father 'd say to see her good bedroom door tucked away in the cellar behind the purtater bin, and a curtain hung up in place of it. But she's so sot, Patience is—mebbe I'd orter hinted to Brother Jones that he'd better not mention the pink rose an' the lace curtains the same day. 'Then there's them two long side curls she pins on most every afternoon—I do hope he'll notice 'em. I wonder if she's got 'em on today.'" The anxious watcher pressed her eyes as close to the crevice as her long nose would permit. "Yes," said she, "she's got on her curls, I do hope he'll notice 'em. There, he's goin' away. I wonder 'f she's insulted him. No, she's smilin' an' he's smilin', too—she's took it fust rate. Dear good man! how perlite he is! He takes off his hat an' bows to 'er, jest the way Elder Brown o' Boston did to me one day. I do hope the conference 'll send Brother Jones back here next year," and with her hand on her heart she drew a long, deep sigh.

"I b'lieve I'll jest run over to Patience's with one o' my fresh pies—I'll jest hand 'er the pie 'n' come right home, er she might think I'd

come over to spy 'round an' ask questions. While she's takin' the pie off'm the tin an' puttin' it on a plate, I'll jest notice if she's been a-cryin'."

Patience, unaware of the plot to rescue her as a brand from the burning, was unable to fathom her sister's kindness in giving her the pie and the cucumbers.

On Saturday the minister called again and staid to tea. Prudence took up her post at the window and listened, but the wind was blowing and she could not hear their voices.

"I s'pose he thinks he kin git a better hold on 'er by bein' sociable like an' stayin' to tea. A'most all women'll stan' more when they're servin' tea over their own table than anywhere else. I know I would. I know Brother Jones 'd hev a powerful influence over me at my own table, if there wa'n't no one else' round to take my mind off."

So the weeks went by, and the minister continued his calls. One day he called on Prudence, but she had no opportunity to ask him how he was succeeding and if he had any hope of a final rescue, for Patience came with him.

"What a turrible wrestle the poor man mus' be a-havin' with 'er!" said Prudence to herself

as she lighted the lamp and sat down to read. "I do hope he won't give 'er over to Satan."

Prudence always sat down to read after the supper dishes were washed, and always went directly to sleep with the book in her lap. The result was, she had been all summer reading the first two chapters of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. She dreamed as she sat there snoring with her mouth open and her lower jaw resting on her breast, that there was some one knocking on the door. She opened the door (in her dream) and saw Patience standing on the steps, all dressed in white from head to foot. On her head she wore a wreath of white roses, and held a bunch of the same kind in her hand; then she heard some more knocks that were less ethereal than the first, and that caused her to shut her mouth and open her eyes.

"Some one is a-knockin', I b'lieve," said she, rising, the *Pilgrim's Progress* with her spectacles inside sliding off her lap to the floor. She cautiously parted the muslin curtains and peeped out.

"Why, it's Brother Jones. The dear, good man! he's come to tell me 'bout Patience—I do hope—Good evenin', Brother Jones, come right in an' set down. I do b'lieve I must 'a' been a-dozin' when you knocked the fus' time—did

you knock the fus' time, Brother Jones, er did I dream it?"

"I knocked several times, Sister Tolbert, but I felt sure you were at home, because there was such a bright light in the room."

"Yes, yes, you're quite right, Brother Jones, I'm to home," replied Prudence, in the confusion of her sudden awakening.

"I came over this evening, Sister Tolbert, to talk to you about—about—"

"Yes, about my sister, about Patience, Brother Jones, I do hope you ain't discouraged, I do hope you've won 'er over—I ain't ever mentioned the subjick to 'er sence you took up the work—I've lef' it all to you, Brother Jones, all to your s'perior knowledge an' judgment."

"I feel, Sister Tolbert—" began the minister.

"Mebbe I'd orter told ye beforehand, Brother Jones, how stubborn Patience is. Our poor, dear father was jes' so. Now Patience is no more like mother an' me than a black sheep's like a white one. I hope you ain't give 'er up, Brother Jones."

"No sister, I haven't given her up—I never give anybody up, but I really feel a little guilty in—"

"Oh, there ain't no call fer ye to feel guilty, dear brother, I'm sure you've done yer best,"

hastily interposed Prudence. "How d'ye think it 'ud do to speak about it in class-meetin', an' hev the brothers an' sisters talk to 'er reel ser'ous about it?" The face of the minister was instantly suffused with an angry blush, but his thorough and persistent schooling in self-control came quickly to his rescue.

"It would never do, sister, it would never do at all. Your sister is proud spirited, and it would be sure to hurt her very much."

"But hurtin' is often the only way to cure, Brother Jones, an' Patience is—"

"Do let me explain to you, Sister Tolbert," spiritedly interrupted the minister, rising to his feet and planting himself squarely in front of her.

"I do not wish to have my position any longer misunderstood, and especially by you. I feel that I owe it to you, sister,—that you of all others, have a right to know." Then there followed an embarrassing silence during which Prudence drew herself up and seemed to freeze stiff in her chair. Her purple lips paled and she drew them in quite out of sight, keeping her black eyes, unrelieved by a single wink, glued to the minister's face. He shifted his position a little, ran his fingers round between his throat and collar, thrust his hands up to his thumbs

into his trousers pockets, and looked intently at one of the twisted stripes in her rag carpet. There was something in his face that awed her. He was a man of God, and she knew it.

"Sister 'Tolbert," he began, "I had fully made up my mind, before you invited me to tea six weeks ago yesterday, to call upon your sister and have a talk with her, not about her apparel, but herself. I have admired Sister Patience ever since I have known her, but I must admit that not until the day she wore the pink rose, which so much offended you, did I become fully conscious of how really pretty and sweet she is. Far better, it appeared to me, to wear the flowers God has made, than the rag ones most women wear. In justice to myself, Sister 'Tolbert, I must tell you that I have mentioned to her at different times the sinfulness of—of—too much vanity, wishing to be true to my calling and your injunction; but to tell the truth, I can find no fault in Patience, Sister 'Tolbert. I have this evening asked her to be my wife, and I hope and pray that God may make me more nearly worthy of her."

There was another silence in which the old-fashioned "Seth Thomas" clock ticked louder and more slowly. The minister caught himself counting the tick-tacks as they mowed

down the seconds. He roused himself and spoke. Prudence gave a start as his voice broke the roaring stillness.

"I hope and trust you will not oppose us, Sister Tolbert. Give me your hand and say you will not mar our happiness by opposition, but that you will give us your prayers and blessing."

He took her unwilling hand in his. It was cold and stiff. Her sallow face had turned ashen.

"I can't—I can't do it," she gasped at last; "You hev deceived me, Brother Jones, you hev deceived me, an' Patience has deceived me. I can't never fergit it, no, not as long as I live."

"I'm very sorry, Sister Tolbert, very sorry indeed," and his fine face did not belie his words.

"I shall pray for you, sister, and I hope that you also will pray for me, and—Patience, and that God in his unerring wisdom and goodness may direct us all." He held her hand a moment longer as if waiting for a response. Then he dropped it, bade her good night, and went home.

Prudence rose and locked the door with a snap before her departing guest had had time to get off the door-step. Then she took some

nails, went out to the well and nailed up the gate. She hoped that Patience would hear and understand. Patience heard, understood, and smiled.

Prudence went straight to bed after she had nailed up the gate, giving everything she touched, even the pillows and the log-cabin quilt, spiteful little jerks. She got into bed, turned on her side, closed her eyes, and tried her best to convince herself that she was going directly to sleep—it was not her fault if folks would make fools of themselves. She had fully made up her mind that she would never again go into the church while Brother Jones occupied the pulpit.

“How mad Patience will be to find the gate nailed up! I wonder if she’s got enough water in the house to git breakfus’ with.”

The hours wore away, and not until the night began to grow gray in the east did she fall into a little troubled sleep. She dreamed that Patience was dying of thirst, and she awoke sobbing, with the picture of her imagination before her eyes. After a few minutes she got up, dressed herself, and slipped cautiously out the back door, taking the hammer and chisel with her; then with great care to make no noise, she pulled out the nails she had driven into the gate.

At no time during the six weeks that followed preceding the date set for the marriage of the minister and Patience, could Prudence be induced to unbend even so much as to speak to the prospective bride, whose marriage she felt to be a crowning injury, and an insult to an elder sister.

Brother Jones called on Prudence, but she would have nothing to say to him. Her lips seemed eternally sealed.

Patience wondered why she sat up so late nights. She could see her light sometimes as late as twelve o'clock. Prudence was sewing. She was a good seamstress and took much pride in her fine hemstitching and embroidery.

"It's not that I 'prove of a woman o' her age an' perfection a-marryin'," she said to herself, as she hemmed away at the dainty ruffle, "but a woman had orter hev good underclose and plenty of 'em on sech 'casions."

When she had finished the two complete suits, she washed them; but how to get them dry without her sister's knowledge, was a puzzle. It was hard for Prudence to show any slack in the tension of her feelings.

"If I dry 'em in the house they won't look nohow—I'll jest hev ter put 'em on the line; I'll jest hev to." So she did, hanging sheets over

them. She ironed the two suits on Tuesday and the task took her all day; she was so particular about it. At ten o'clock she saw that Patience had gone to bed. She slipped cautiously out, and went over to her sister's, carrying a long white pasteboard box in her arms; she raised the kitchen window, slid the box through upon the table and went home. Patience found it the next morning when she went into the kitchen. It was the day before the wedding. She knew to whom the box belonged; she had seen it often—Prudence had for years kept bits of laces and ribbons in it. She opened the box, wondering. On the top, pinned to the bosom of one of the nightgowns was a note which read as follows:

“Dear Sister Patience:

“You ain't got no mother, so I hev made these things fer you in her place. I hev prayed most all nite fer you an' Brother Jones. Mebbe it's all fer the best, you gettin' married, fer if I should be took away, you wode be alone in this cold world, an' I don't expect to live long.

“Your Sister, Prudence.”

Patience ran weeping to the door of her sister's kitchen; it was open and Prudence stood at the table pouring out her breakfast coffee. She looked old and worn. Her eyes seemed to have settled back in her head, and there were deep blue circles under them. The women regarded one another a moment in silence, then Patience broke into sobs and threw herself into her sister's arms.

"I—I—do—don't deserve such a good sister as you be, Prudence, I—I—don't deserve you."

Prudence patted her on the back a moment as if she were a child. Then she turned to the stove—the water in the teakettle was boiling over.

"Now, don't be a fool, Patience 'Tolbert. Set down here an' eat yer breakfus'. I guess you've got enough to do today without cookin'," and as Prudence turned to take the toast from the oven, she furtively whipped away an offending tear from the end of her nose.

When the minister and his wife returned from their trip to Boston, they found in the parsonage kitchen, among many other substantial wedding gifts, three bottles of sweet pickles and a jar of raspberry jam from Prudence.

TRANSPLANTED

TRANSPLANTED

"Mahetabel, come, yer breakfas' is all ready on the table."

"Mother, I wish you wouldn't call me by that hateful name!"

A tall, fair young girl in a fresh pink calico and white apron came into the kitchen and seated herself before the one plate on the table. "It makes me wish I'd never had a grandmother."

"Well, you won't hev one much longer, child; Grandma's eighty-four year old tomorrow. What would ye like to hev me call ye? Mahetabel's yer name, an' I don't like to call ye what ain't yer name."

"Call me Hetty; that's what all the girls at school call me."

"Well, mebbe the girls to school know more about it than yer mother that named ye," and Mrs. Bryan rolled up the dish towels she had just sprinkled, and set the teakettle on the front part of the stove.

"Mother, why don't you eat when I do? Do you know the neighbors are talking about it? Mabel Jones told me yesterday that Retta Campbell told her that her Aunt Jennie said that all that ailed you last summer was that you starved yourself so I could outdress the other girls and take singing lessons. I suppose she's jealous because she can't learn to sing from a regular teacher. The Joneses are as poor as church mice," and Mahetabel tilted her thin nose and gave her head a sneering toss as she spread her toast.

"She says she's taking lessons from her mother. Humph! Mrs. Jones has about as much music in her voice as an old crow."

"You shouldn't oughter talk that way, Mahetabel; the poor woman's had a hard—"

"I won't answer you, mother, if you call me Mahetabel," and the smooth forehead gathered into little puckers between the brows.

"O I forgot, Mahet—Hetty. Ye see it's hard fer old folks to change. It'd be pretty hard fer you to turn round all to once an' call me father, now wouldn't it?"

Hetty did not reply; she was busy thinking.

"What do you eat, mother, after I've eaten? I never leave anything on the table. Now this morning I've got one piece of cheese, a boiled

egg, and three pieces of toast, and I shall eat every scrap of it; now what are you going to eat? It ain't pleasant for me to have the neighbors making such remarks."

"No, Hetty, it ain't pleasant fer ye, I know it ain't. I jest wish they'd 'tend to their own affairs. Now don't you worry a bit about me, Mahetabel—Hetty, I mean—fer I always manage to have a bite o' something,—if it ain't jest what you have. A girl goin' to school studyin' hard needs more t' eat than a body that's stayin' about the house all day. Jennie Mason had no call to say anything. I mind well the time me an' Prudence Tolbert an' Clar'sy went visitin' to her house one day unexpected like, an' everything she had to set before us was dry bread, boiled beets, an' tea, an' it 'pears to me I've got jest as good a right to pinch myself if I want to save a little extry as other folks have." The stick of wood Mrs. Bryan mechanically thrust into the stove crackled and snapped in unison with her feelings.

The girl was quite convinced, when she rose from the table, tied on her hat and started down the walk toward the gate, that she needed more to eat than her mother, and that her mother had a right to starve herself if she wished.

Mrs. Bryan watched her daughter from the kitchen window until she could see only the bunch of red poppies in her hat, bobbing up and down over the bright green hedge. Then she turned to the table, set away the cup of sugar and the little print of butter, drained the last drop from the coffee pot into her daughter's cup and stood before the kitchen stove drinking it. Tears filled her eyes and she seemed to swallow a lump with each sip of coffee. When she had finished, she wiped her wet cheeks, set the cup in the sink and began talking to herself—a habit she had when alone.

“Mahetabel shall not go without things for my fault, not if I can help it. I s'pose I hadn't ought to 'a' done it, but who could let a brother lose his home for two hundred dollars? I couldn't. Why, I thought as much as could be he'd pay it back—Dick was always a good boy—an awful good boy, but no manager. He knew the interest on that money was all I had to live on, too, except the four dollars a month father left me. Dear me, how comf'table we could be if we had that extry twenty dollars a year as we use' to hev. Mahetabel could have everything she needs. Uncle John told me Dick'd never pay it back, but I felt sure he'd pay

me; mebbe he can't, poor feller. I guess he would if he could, an' mebbe he don't re'lize how I need it. Guess I'll write to Uncle John an' ask him where Dick is; I ain't had a letter from him fer purt' nigh a year. I hope he ain't discouraged, er sick. Dick's awful easy discouraged. Poor Mahetabel! she sha'n't suffer for it, she shall have her white dress trimmed with embroidery jest as I promised her. I dunno how I'll get it, though, unless I sell that Chiny crepe shawl. (Prudence says Mis' Porter wants it.) She shall have enough t' eat too, poor child, she ain't to blame."

Mahetabel Bryan was seventeen, had always had everything she wished, and had never been allowed to find out from actual experience that she was a "poor child." It never occurred to her that she ought sometimes to help her mother about the work, and she had never been asked to help. Her mother had always been a drudge, her father a farmer, and she the spoiled pet of them both. The best of everything had always been dealt out to the child as if it were her due.

The neighbors had been greatly touched at the girl's grief, the summer before, when Mrs. Bryan lay very ill. Mahetabel had cried her-

self into hysteria, moaning—not “poor mother, how she is suffering;” but, “what will become of me if mother dies.”

No girl in Pepperton dressed better than Hetty Bryan. Her mother did all her sewing, and spared herself no pains in ruffles, tucks, hand embroideries and flounces.

Hetty was a handsome girl, tall and slender, with clear, fair complexion, hazel eyes and bright auburn curls that lay in pretty confusion over her back and shoulders. She was a merciless coquette and was never quite so happy as when wresting from some other girl a devoted lover, and neglect of her studies on account of these intrigues constantly made her fall behind in her classes. She was not a general favorite with the girls of the village, and the secrets confided to her were mostly disagreeable things about herself which they had “heard.” To all such information she would give her head an independent toss and say she didn’t care; this was perfectly true.

With very young men and boys she was a favorite, for no one could deny her beauty, grace and fascinating manner. She had a dominating spirit, to which most of her associates yielded unconsciously. There was not a boy in the village school who would not

go out of his way to serve Hetty Bryan just for the pleasure of seeing her smile. She had learned her power early, and had used it to the utmost. She labored under the delusion that all the good things of the world were meant for her. For any other girl to have an admirer she felt to be an affront to her powers of conquest and at once set herself to work to adjust things. Whether she liked or disliked the young man in question made not the slightest difference in her siege for his affections; and, to make matters worse, she had never yet failed to accomplish her purpose. She had the rare quality of being able to drop her friends and pick them up according to her whim, without being required to give any account of it.

Mrs. Bryan sat on a stool in front of the kitchen stove, her elbow on her knee and her forefinger buried in her cheek; she was deep in thought.

"Yes, that's jest how it come out. It come over me all in a minute. Lijy ust to say I was the worst woman he ever see to find out things. Why, I could tell the minute that man came in the house—the minute I set eyes on him—when he'd been into mischief, an' he was up to enough of it, poor Lijy. 'Twa'n't that he acted different; he didn't; it was jest as if some one had tole

me,—I was that sure of it. He'd explain an' explain an' sometimes I'd pertend I believed him jest to make him feel easy, but I knew all the time I was right. Lijy was too good lookin', there was the trouble, he was too good lookin'. The women somehow always found it out. He had wonderful handsome eyes, Lijy had; an' Mahetabel's is jest like 'em.

"When she was little, Mis' Barnes the poet use' to say: 'How much your little daughter favors her father, Mis' Bryan,' an' then she'd pick her up an' hug and kiss her—she took pizen the day Lijy an' me was married, but she didn't take enough." There was a cessation in the monologue while Mrs. Bryan poked the fire into an angry blaze.

"An' once when we was down to Hackman's bush to a sugarin' off, she said (Lijy had jest handed her a sasser o' snow) 'Mis' Bryan, I don't see how you can keep your eyes off 'm your husband, there's somethin' so appealin' in his face an' manner.' I told her I could take my eyes off 'm him, but I didn't s'pose I'd ort to, an' as to his manner I was glad he had better manners 'n some folks I knew. I jes' thought I'd give her a hint. The hussy! she made me a lot o' trouble while she lived; but she's dead now, poor thing. It worries me a little some-

times to think they're up there together,"—Mrs. Bryan rose and again poked the blazing fire vigorously—"but the Lord 'll take care o' my interest, I don't need to worry, the Lord 'll take care. Lijy was a good man, an awful good man, but I—do—hope—Mahetabel won't—be—Dear me, I must make the buttonholes in them piller cases b'fore I f'git it!"

As she passed through the little sitting-room she stopped before a portrait of her dead husband that hung in a large oval frame made of shells. She gazed at it with a look of anxious love, her hands tightly clasped on her breast.

"I do wonder if they're in the same spear—they say they's a good many of 'em. I hope the Lord'll manage some way to put 'em in different spears—but laws a me! I don't need to worry."

As she settled herself in her low rocker by the window her mind reverted to the gossip of her neighbors.

"Yes," she repeated, "I know jest precisely how it got out." The sewing and her hands dropped together in her lap.

"Las' summer, when I was jes' gettin' over my sick spell, Mahetabel, poor child, was clean tuckered out with worryin', so I sent her over to her grandma's to rest up a week, an' when

there warn't no one here to cook fer but me, I felt so weak an' gone like that I didn't cook much; I felt as if I'd ruther go without. On the Friday b'fore Mahetabel come home, Em'ly Tucker come over an' insisted on makin' me a cup o' tea. I didn't want her to, 'cause I knew they wa'n't a thing t' eat in that butt'ry but some dry bread and cold potatoes. But she would go, an' in about five minutes she come back in an' said she couldn't make the fire burn; so she'd go home an' make it on her own stove. I knew very well 'twas b'cause she couldn't find nothin' t' eat, but I didn't let on—what could I say? Laws a massy! I was never so mortified in all my life. In about an hour here she comes with a great platter full o' fried chicken, mashed potato, slaw, an' a pot o' tea. I didn't reely know how hungry I was till I got a smell o' that fried chicken. I commenced eatin'—ruther mincin' like, for I had told her when she offered to make the tea for me that I hadn't much appetite; but I couldn't hold out long after I'd got a taste, an' I never stopped till I'd et every scrap on that platter. It scart me after I'd finished to think how much I'd et. I was sorry I hadn't left some. Em'ly said she was sorry she hadn't brought more. Em'ly's a good girl, but she will talk an' everybody

knows it. Yes, that's jest how it got out, an' they've gone an' blamed that poor innocent child. Now let me see." Mrs. Bryan half closed her eyes and gazed out of the window.

"Em'ly said she'd stop in tomorrow afternoon, on her way down to Burnham's, to look at Mahetabel's pink lawn; she wants to make one like it for Mattie Burnham that's goin' to marry that young Blake feller." Then Mrs. Bryan picked up her work and made two button-holes without speaking a word, during which time she solved a problem and determined upon a line of action.

It was one o'clock when the pillow cases were finished. Mrs. Bryan went out into the kitchen, and into the buttery. A fresh egg lay in a saucer; she took it in her hand and stroked it thoughtfully. "No, I must use this for the cookies," she said. And laying it back in the saucer, she put on her green slat sunbonnet and walked slowly toward the barn. She was not an old woman, only forty-five; but she looked older. Her shoulders were bent, her face had a pinched look, and her thin lips had in them no tint of pink. Her sharp shoulder blades showed through her thin brown calico. Her dress was short and she flipped up the hem with her heels as she walked.

She got down on her knees and looked in the nest under the manger. She thought she saw an egg. She got down flat on her face and ran her arm through between the boards to get it; but it was only a white feather. Then she climbed up the ladder to the old hay loft, and crawled through the little square hole cut in the floor; but there were no eggs up there. She backed through the hole and down the ladder, feeling her way carefully.

"I guess I'll go an' fry me a piece o' that nice side pork. That'll be a good deal better fer me than an egg."

The next morning she was up bright and early. Mahetabel had just seated herself at the breakfast table.

"Why mother, what made you get breakfast so early? It's half an hour earlier than usual."

"I know it's a little earlier, but I've got a good deal to do today." Mrs. Bryan was wiping the toast crumbs off the bright kitchen stove.

"Mother, I wish you'd boil an egg hard an' put in my dinner basket. I wish you'd always put in a hard boiled egg when there ain't any cold meat for my dinner—Mother! did you hear? I said—"

"Yes, Mahetabel, you can have one jes' as

well as not," and she poured some boiling water from the teakettle into a basin on the stove and dropped the only egg into it.

"Mother, don't call me Mahetabel. I won't answer when you do. I wish you'd cut another slice o' bread. I want just enough to finish this little piece o' honey."

"O, my dear child, what shall I do? There ain't another scrap o' bread in the house—I'm jest goin' to bake—I—but let me bake ye a pancake, Mahetabel—Hetty I mean, I can have one baked in five minutes."

"No, I can't wait; I shall have to run now, I've got to go to the store and get a new copy book b'fore school begins."

Hetty rather enjoyed the discomfiture of her mother, for she thought there was no reason why there should not always be plenty of bread. It was, in her opinion, poor management. She rose pettishly, threw her napkin down in a heap on the table, took the last swallow of her coffee standing beside her chair, then with her full red lips in a pout, she tied on her hat and started to school.

Mrs. Bryan wiped her eyes as she watched her daughter from the kitchen window. Hetty's thin white apron strings were flapping in the wind, and she had to hold her hat on as she

turned the corner, "Poor child, she's hungry. She ain't to blame for bein' cross. I'll make a roll or two when I bake the bread an' take it to school for her. I must pitch into the work now; I've got a sight to do this forenoon."

Mrs. Bryan built a good fire, then put on her sunbonnet and went out to the barn. Two speckled hens moved indifferently out of her path as she walked along.

"I never see hens with such red combs that didn't lay. I can't 'count fer it nohow. I s'pose the cookies'll look all right, but they won't taste good made without eggs, an' I want her to eat one jes' to show her we don't starve all the time if we be a little short now an' then. O dear! there ain't an egg in this nest, not one. What shall I do? I guess I'll run over to Prudence's an' see if I can't borrow—Oh! Oh! Laws a massy, how that hen scart me!" screamed Mrs. Bryan, jumping and shaking her skirts as an equally terrified hen, cackling frantically, flew out from somewhere beneath her petticoats.

"That hen's got a nest here somewhere," gasped the woman, "she wouldn't make all that fuss fer nothin'; an' it ain't fur away, nuther. Dear me, how she did scare me!"

The discovery of two new nests containing

fifteen eggs was the reward Mrs. Bryan reaped for her search. She carried them in her apron and laid them away with the caressing touch of a miser.

"Thirteen, an' two left in the nests. They'll lay more, of course. I'll fry one an' eat it. I shall feel more like work. An egg's a good deal better fer me than pork. Salt pork ain't very good anyway, after it's two year old."

At eleven o'clock the kitchen floor had been scrubbed as white as soap, sand, water and hard work could make it. A hot dried currant pie steamed on the table beside two loaves of bread, some rolls and a pan of cookies.

Mrs. Bryan's face was very red when she hung up her kitchen apron and sat down a minute to rest. She looked at the things on the table with a smile of satisfaction. "I guess Em'ly 'll be surprised when she sees what's on that table. Starvin', humph! we'll show 'em 't we ain't starvin'. I hope the cookies are sweet enough; I didn't dare use any more sugar, for there ain't only a teacupful left for Mahetabel's coffee, an' I can't get any more till the four dollars comes. Dear, I hope I ain't robbed Mahetabel's coffee. If I hadn't found them eggs what would I 'a' done? How good the Lord is to them that has faith. I never got into

a tight place in my life that I wasn't helped out of it some way onexpected. Well, I must go right off if I git there b'fore school lets out fer noon."

She brushed back her hair, put on her church dress and bonnet, with its faded spray of purple flowers, and a clean starched white apron. Mrs. Bryan was never seen about the village, excepting on Sundays, without a clean, white apron, and it was only in compliance with the wishes of Mahetabel (who had observed that no one else wore them) that she had left off wearing them to meeting. As a compromise she wore on Sundays, over her rusty alpaca, an apron of black silk trimmed across the bottom with two rows of black velvet ribbon.

It was a half mile to the schoolhouse and the roads were very dusty. She hurried along so as to get there before school was dismissed, because she did not wish the scholars to know of her errand, lest they blame Mahetabel. She handed the little parcel containing a warm roll and two cookies to the janitor who stood in the door. She carried a large parcel under her shawl. She had walked fast and drops of sweat were coursing down her face and neck.

"Jes' han' it to her quiet like, Mr. Jameson, jes' say somebody left it for her—ye needn't

tell who 'twas. Mahetabel wouldn't like it if she knew I'd come so far—jes' to—" Then, as a bulwark to protect her child, the most innocent of lies sprang to her lips, lending a momentary false dignity—"but I was jest goin' by to the postoffice, an' it wa'n't no trouble."

The janitor took the parcel, searching the face grown old in middle age for traces of the girlish beauty of twenty years before when he had sued in vain for her love. But this is another story.

"I didn't know you was janitor here, Mr. Jameson." The rest of the sentence—"if I had I wouldn't have come"—was left unsaid. "Ye see Mahetabel never mentioned it."

"I jest come over to relieve Henry for a few days, Jane, he's clean done up an' I didn't want to see him lose his job—he can't afford to, with his five little children an' a sick wife on his hands. So I swapped places with him for a few days—it's easy work round the greenhouse—he'll jest have to see to things, I got a man to do all the hard work."

"It's awful good in ye, Joshua. Mahetabel tol' me Henry was enjoyin' poor health." Jane put her fingers over her mouth and coughed a little, strained, company cough.

"You're lookin' pretty well, Jane," said

Joshua, thinking at the moment how old and worn she looked. Jane cleared her throat and colored.

"I'm in hopes we're goin' to git rain purty soon," he continued, "it's dretful dry, ain't it?" and to relieve his own embarrassment Joshua looked inquiringly up at the sky. Mrs. Bryan looked up too, but there was not a cloud to be seen.

"I guess I'd better be goin', Joshua; it might rain b'fore I git home."

"O no, 'twon't, Jane, set down an' rest a spell. You look clean tuckered out."

"No, thank ye, Joshua, I mus' be goin'."

Just as Mrs. Bryan turned to go down the steps the doors of the lower rooms burst open and the schoolhouse belched forth a howling, shrieking, scuffling mob of boys, such as can be found nowhere on earth but at the "letting out" of a public school. Just as Mrs. Bryan was about to pass through the gateway, a small piece of brick struck her between the shoulders. There was a snort of laughter followed by a boy's unearthly yell, cut short into a gurgling sound.

"Don't don't, Joshua, you're a-chokin' of him. You didn't go to do it, did ye sonny? Why it's Teddy Blodgett, poor child."

"I—I—I—" gasped the boy, with a very red face, for Joshua had him by the collar—"I—I—I—"

"Ye didn't go to do it, did ye, Teddy?" said Mrs. Bryan bending over him in a motherly fashion.

"Joe Mason t—t—tol' me—"

"What did ye throw at the lady for, ye little red-headed devil?" questioned Joshua, giving his prisoner a backward jerk.

"I—I—I—"

"Stop yer bawlin'," roared Joshua, "an' tell what ye did it for. Ye ain't hurt."

The boy was yelling with fright, boring with his dirty fists into his wet eyes, and the half masticated bite of apple he had snatched from a little girl was rolling down his wide open mouth over his dirt-glazed coat front.

"What did ye say about Joe Mason, Ted? He put ye up to it, did he?"

"Huh?" questioned the boy looking up into Joshua's face with round eyes that looked like blue buttons.

"He told ye to do it, did he?" With a hope of being able to fix the blame on some one else by turning state's evidence, the boy immediately ceased crying, and with an affirmative jerk of his head, "Yes, he did, he—he tol' me to do it,"

said the culprit in a jerky voice sticking out his thick lips. "He—he's mad at Mis' Bryan 'cause Hetty mittened his brother Sam las' Sunday, an' he tol' me to hit her—he—he—gimme the piece o' brick."

"I'll tend to Joe Mason, Jane, he's big enough to know better," said Joshua, releasing the boy, who was glad to be free from the big hand at the back of his neck. Teddy lost no time in assuring the crowd of boys that stood about with pocketed hands and interested faces, "that he wasn't afraid of old Josh Jameson, nohow, and that he didn't hurt him a bit; he didn't dast." The boys turned away in disgust that an affair which at first had promised so much excitement should end so tamely. They went away behind the schoolhouse and discussed it, each boy telling of all the daring things he would have done if he had been in Teddy's place, keeping the while a good sharp lookout on the corner of the schoolhouse lest his courage be put to a test by the sudden appearance of the giant Joshua.

"I s'pose I must go on down to the postoffice now to bolster up that lie I told," whispered Jane to herself. "Dear me! I hope Joshua didn't hurt the poor little feller."

"No, there's no letter for you, Mrs. Bryan,

not that I know of—lemme see—just wait a minute. Kate! is there a letter here for Mrs. Jane Bryan? Look careful.”

“O, don’t go to so much trouble, Mr. Smith, I—I don’t s’pose—”

“O, it’s no trouble, Mrs. Bryan, that’s what we’re here for, to serve the people. Which way did you expect yer letter from, Mrs. Bryan, East or West? Ye see there’s a mail in from the East in half an hour, and it might be your letter’s on that train; if you’re in no particular hurry you can just step right in the office here and take a seat and wait till it comes.”

Mrs. Bryan drummed nervously on the counter with her fingers while the postmaster gazed at her through the little square window. He felt sorry for her, she looked so worried. Mrs. Bryan was tempted to run out of the post-office without another word, but she felt nailed to the floor. She moved about a little that he might not see how she was trembling.

“I—I wa’n’t sure I’d git a letter, Mr. Smith,” she stammered, picking at the fringe of her shawl, “but I thought there might be one, an’—an’—”

“Did you expect your letter from the East, Mrs. Bryan, or from the West?”

“From—from the West, I think,” gasped the

woman in desperation; her tongue was growing stiff in her dry throat. "O dear! mother always ust to say a lie couldn't stan' alone but always had to have two or three of its kind to prop it up," thought Jane as she shifted from one foot to the other. "O, I wish I was out o' here, I had ort to 'a' knowed better."

"Here 'tis, father, here's Mrs. Bryan's letter. It came from the West five days ago, but nobody's called for it."

Jane Bryan gasped and put her hand to her throat; she could not conceal her astonishment. "It's a mistake—I guess it ain't fer me, Mr. Smith; it—it can't be for me," taking a step backward, "it—it can't be."

"Why, yes 'tis." Mr. Smith adjusted his glasses and held the letter up to a level with his eyes. "Yes 'tis, if your name's Jane Katherine Bryan, it's for you. There's no other Jane Bryan in Pepperton that I know of." Mr. Smith had a way of holding his head very high and looking at people from under his glasses.

"Yes, that's me." Jane took the letter, thrust it into her pocket and hurried away, feeling as if she had committed a theft. On the second street from the postoffice there was a large white house with green window blinds. It was the largest house in Pepperton. Mrs. Bryan

walked up the steps of this, to her, palatial home with a feeling of trepidation. A little black-and-tan dog lying on the door-mat barked threateningly as she approached the door, showing his little teeth gleaming white between his black lips.

"Why come right in, Mrs. Bryan, I hope the dog didn't scare ye. Go 'way, Topsy; go 'way, you rascal." The dog dropped down resting his head on his fore paws and blinked knowingly. He did not go away; he 'knew the command would not be enforced.

"You look tired, Mrs. Bryan, sit down in this rocker, it's real easy."

The visitor glanced at the delicate silk upholstery and stood hesitating.

"I'm afraid that's a little low fer me, Mis' Porter, ye see I'm taller 'n you be," and she seated herself in a still lower chair with a leather cushion.

"I brought over that black Chiny crepe shawl, Mis' Porter; Prudence Tolbert tol' me you wanted it, an—an—reely I hain't no use fer it; it's too good fer the rest o' my things—Prudence said you'd give me six dollars fer it, Mis' Porter."

"Yes, I told Miss Tolbert I'd take the shawl if you wanted to sell it for six dollars."

"Yes, I'll take six dollars fer it, Mis' Porter, an' here 'tis; I brought it over."

Mrs. Porter moved uneasily, cleared her throat hard and brushed an imaginary speck from her bosom, which enormous bulk was crowded up into a comfortable shelf for her pink double chin. Her heavy blonde hair hung in a loose knot at the nape of her neck. Her voice was low and she had a purring way of drawing out and blending her words which was emphasized when she had anything disagreeable to say. She had beautiful teeth and a chronic smile. Mrs. Bryan sat gazing at her in silent admiration.

"Really now, Mrs. Bryan, don't you think six dollars a little too much for it?" asked Mrs. Porter with a coaxing tone and a little more smile, exactly as if she were trying to persuade her guest to have another lump of sugar in her tea.

"I don't need it you see, Mrs. Bryan, it's just a fancy of mine," and she toyed with the gold heart-slide on her watch chain.

"Well, mebbe 'tis—mebbe six dollars is too much, Mis' Porter—I dunno but 'tis."

"What did it cost new, Mrs. Bryan?"

"Thirty dollars. My mother's brother brought it all the way home from Chiny an'

give it to mother fer a weddin' present, an' it's never been on the back but jes' three times, and them big embroidery chrysanthenums in the corners must 'a' been a sight o' work; but mebbe six dollars is too much—the Lord knows I don't want too much," and Mrs. Bryan silently congratulated herself on her narrow escape from the sin of taking more than her just due. "What would you think about right, Mis' Porter?"

"Well, I should be willing to give five dollars. It's a nice shawl."

"Very well, you may have it." Mrs. Bryan's knees trembled when she walked down the steps. The rich woman's voice was very musical when she said, "Good afternoon." Then the heavy door slammed.

With her five dollar bill tied up tightly in a corner of her handkerchief Jane went to the store and bought Mahetabel's white dress with embroidery to trim, and hurried home over the dusty road.

"O dear, how tired I be! I'm all of a trimble; an' how my legs do ache. I hope Em'ly ain't been here; I'm later 'n I meant to be," said she, as, laying her parcel with her bonnet and shawl on a chair, she sat down to rest. "Now I've got this money I can git a little more sugar

when I hev to; sugar's gone up a cent an' a half." Mrs. Bryan stroked her thin cheeks reflectively. "I b'lieve I'll stop usin' sugar myself; they say it's apt to bring on rheumatiz in ole folks, an' I should hate dretful to git the rheumatiz; none o' my folks ever hed it. What if Em'ly should come to the front door? dear me, what if she should? She usually comes to the back door. I must make her come in the back way now; how can I manage it?"

She was silent for a few minutes, then she rose, locked the front door, put the key under the Bible on the table and went out into the kitchen. She felt faint and hungry; the cookies looked tempting; she took one, went back into the sitting-room and sat down to eat it.

"I don't like the feelin', somehow, of havin' that key under the Bible." She rose and slipped it under Hetty's old grammar.

"For massy sakes alive! I forgot all about that letter! I wonder if it is fer me." She laid her cooky with one bite out of it on the window sill, then opened and read her letter. It was from her Uncle John and contained the news that her brother Dick had sold his home, taken the money and gone, some thought to New Zealand, no one knew where. Uncle John was very sorry for Jane and hoped she would

not suffer for the want of the money; but he could not refrain from reminding her every now and then that he had told her just how it would be,—that Dick was a rascal and always had been.

“Uncle John always was down on Dick,” murmured Jane, “because he don’t git around somehow to pay his debts. Dick has allus been in debt an’ I guess he allus will be, poor feller! he don’t seem to know how to git along. I thought when I opened the letter that jest as like as not it was from Dick with the money in it. How glad I would ’a’ been. Gone to New Zealand!” said Jane, folding the letter slowly, “I guess that mus’ be a long ways off. I must ask Hetty where ’tis. I’ll write to Uncle John this very week an’ tell him I’m gettin’ along fust rate without the money, fust rate; an’ I shall tell him ’t I ain’t a mite afraid but what Dick ’ll pay me jes’ as quick as he can. If he ever does pay me, I’m goin’ to try to buy that crepe shawl back. How I did hate to let it go. I guess I can buy it back—Why, yes, Mis’ Porter’ll let me have it back, I most know she will, she’s sech a nice woman, Mis’ Porter is. She’s dretful sympathizin’. She always cries so when she goes to funerals; jest like one o’ the mourners. She never misses goin’ to a funeral.”

"Hello, have ye got comp'ny, or talkin' to yerself as usual?" and Emily Tucker with her fat, freckled face, sandy hair and eyes to match, looked in at the open window.

"Why, how di do, Em'ly? No, I ain't got no comp'ny, come right in—jest step round to the back door, the front door's locked."

"Why can't ye unlock it? I hate to go past them rose bushes, they tag my dress so."

"Why—the front door's locked an'—" Mrs. Bryan bustled about looking eagerly for the key; she felt in her pocket, looked on the mantel and on the floor, "an'—I can't—that is I don't see the key nowheres, Em'ly. I guess you'll hev to come in the kitchen door."

Emily thrust her head in at the window.

"Why, I see it, Jane; it's right under that book on the table."

Mrs. Bryan lifted up the Bible.

"No, the other one, with the gingham cover."

"Why, yes, here 'tis."

"What ye been buyin', Jane? More clothes for Mahetabel? I'll guarantee it ain't anything for yerself."

"Oh, I don't go out much," said Mrs. Bryan, flushing, as she turned a low wooden rocker for her visitor, "an' I've been promisin' Mahetabel a new white dress this long while, an' I thought I might as well git it an' be makin' of it."

“ ’Pears to me you need a new dress yerself, Jane. I was noticin’ last Sunday how fady your alpaccy is in front.”

“ ’Tis a little fady in front, but I’m goin’ to turn it an’ put the back breadths in front.”

“As long as you’re going to rip it up you might as well turn it wrong side out. Liza Pepper turned hers and it looks most as good as new.”

“Well, ye see Em’ly”—and Mrs. Bryan moved uneasily, resting her cheek on her forefinger—“I did turn it three year ago, when Patience Tolbert was married. I fixed it all over new then. It’ll look pretty well when I put the back breadths in front.”

“But what about the front width? have ye got enough without that?”

“O no, it wouldn’t be wide enough; I’m goin’ to put that in the back.”

“You like to look well in front, don’t ye, Jane? Most folks do. Now I’d ruther—dear me, what’s that noise, Jane? Some one’s comin’ up to the kitchen door. Mebbe it’s a peddler.”

“Mebbe ’tis, Em’ly, mebbe ’tis.”

Now if Emily Tucker had a weakness it was for peddlers. She loved to look through their trays, and was not satisfied until she had priced and handled every article they contained. To

her credit let it be said that she never turned one away without buying something.

"Would you mind goin' to the door, Em'ly, while I set the chairs back an' put away my bunnit and shawl?"

Em'ly came back with a disappointed look on her face—it was only the hens on the door-step. They had tipped over a pail of ashes.

"I see you've been bakin', Jane. How nice your bread an' cookies do look."

"Yes, I baked a little this mornin' b'fore I went to the store. Take off yer bunnit, Em'ly, an' I'll make a cup o' tea an' we'll have a bite."

Emily was in a hurry,—she had said so; but eating was another of her weak points. She never refused an invitation to eat.

"I reely ought to be goin', Jane," she protested weakly, at the same time laying aside her bonnet, which was trimmed in front with three short black ostrich tips that stubbornly refused either to bend or to curl.

"It won't take more 'n ten minutes to make some tea, Em'ly; you can be lookin' over Mahetabel's pink dress while I set the table. It's right there in the clothes press."

Mrs. Bryan set the table with care, putting on her best china and fine napkins. She felt, knowing the weakness of her guest, that she

was preparing tea for the whole of Pepperton. "Folks shall know we're not starvin', even if we be a little short now and then," said Jane to herself as she opened her last glass of currant jam and drew the tea.

"How nice your cookies be, Jane. Cookies is most always too sweet fer me, these is jest right," said Emily, as they rose from the table.

"Here, you take this plate full home with ye, Em'ly," said Jane, pinning a clean napkin around a plate of cookies.

"O no, Jane, it 'll be robbin' you."

"Why, no 'twon't, guess I kin make more, can't I? There's more where these come from. You take 'em right along, Em'ly."

"Thank ye, Jane; but dear me, I must eat and run like the beggars! Good-by."

"Good-by, Em'ly, come over agin, won't ye?"

"Yes, I will; you come over real soon, Jane."

"Yes, I will, good-by."

Four years had gone by. Mahetabel Bryan was about to be married to Oscar Wadham, the son of the junior member of the firm of "Wade & Wadham" of Glenwood. The father of Oscar, wishing to start his son in business, had promised, after six months' trial, to give him on his wedding-day a half interest in the

retail grocery store in Pepperton. The result of the half year's trial had been most satisfactory.

Mrs. Bryan's means were nearly exhausted, but it did not trouble her so much now, for she knew that she alone could live on next to nothing; she was used to it. With her little vegetable garden and her twenty hens she could, she felt sure, keep the wolf from the door.

Jane had grown much thinner and older. The four years just passed had bent her form and sapped her blood. Her yellow-white hair was combed smoothly back and twisted into a little hard knot. She sat in her low chair by the window, nervously clasping and unclasping her thin fingers. There was a troubled look on her face. Her daughter, grown handsomer, sat before her rocking violently. The chestnut curls were done up now in loose, wavy coils, leaving the smooth, white neck exposed. The beautiful face was disfigured by a frown.

"I don't see any sense, mother, in your acting so about this old shell of a house and the rubbishy furniture. You gave me the place, and I have a deed of it; now if Oscar and I are willing to give you a room in our new house where you'll be perfectly comfortable, I don't see why you cling to this. It ought to be split up for

kindling wood, along with all the furniture in it. I hate the old thing."

"Yes, Hetty, I did give ye the place b'cause I didn't like to have ye go to your husband with empty hands, and, as you say, you have the papers an' can do jest as you please with the old house in spite o' me; but you know I tol' you at the time, that I wanted to keep the house as long as I lived. It's awful good in you an' Oscar, Hetty, to offer me a room in your new house, but somehow—I can't tell how 'tis—I like the old things best. I shouldn't feel to home with new furniture." A tear trickled down and trembled on the mother's chin, but she wiped it off quickly. Hetty did not see it.

"Well then, if you won't let it be torn down, it'll have to be moved back between the corner of the fence and the woodshed. Oscar says he won't build here unless the old house can be either torn down or moved back, and if we have to buy elsewhere to build on, it will take so much money for the ground that we shall not be able to have much of a house. If we don't have to pay out for the lots, we can have the nicest house in Pepperton and the best furnished, too, except the Porter's. Think how unreasonable you are, mother; how you want to spoil everything just for a whim. I never

knew you to be so selfish. Seems to me you don't regard my happiness at all, you just think of yourself."

Mrs. Bryan was startled; she grasped the arms of her chair and sat up straight. Her thin cheeks flushed and there was a pained look in her face.

"Why, Hetty, I—I didn't know I was selfish, I didn't know it, but mebbe I be—the Lord knows. He knows all hearts, Hetty, an' if they's anything selfish in mine, I hope He'll take it all out. I'm glad you tol' me, child, I guess I be selfish. I want you to have a nice home, Hetty, jest the one you've set your heart on, so you an' Oscar can go on an' build yer new house an' move the old one back in the corner; an' I'll live in it jest as I do now an' hev my own things that I'm use' to. I know I couldn't never learn t' eat with silver forks, Hetty, an' they ain't no use in tryin'." Then she turned her head and looked out of the window toward the hills.

"Do you think I could keep the hens, Hetty? Do you think Oscar'd care if I kep' 'em? It wouldn't seem like home to me without the hens."

"Why of course you can keep the hens, mother, but they'll have to be shut up, an'

there's too many for that little yard; you'd better sell half of 'em or more."

"Very well, Hetty, I'll try an' git along with ten. I guess that'll be as many as I can afford to keep b'cause I shall have to buy feed fer 'em if they're shet up." Mrs. Bryan reflected a few moments in uneasy silence while Hetty's mind was delving into the future.

"Will they hev to be shet up all the time, Hetty?"

"What, mother, the hens?"

"Yes."

"Why, of course. Mrs. Porter always keeps hers shut up; you can't have anything of a decent yard with hens running over it.

"I told Oscar I didn't think you'd be unreasonable, mother, about moving the house; it won't look bad at all back there in the corner b'cause it's painted red like the barn, and it'll look just like a part of it."

"My front door'll come up pretty close to the woodshed, won't it, Hetty?"

"Yes, but there'll be plenty of room to open the door; Oscar measured it."

"I can't see the road from the front door can I? nor the hills from the kitchen winder."

"You can if you go out on the steps, there's nothing in the road to see, anyway; it's a good

deal pleasanter looking over towards the grove."

"No, no, there ain't much to see in the road," hesitatingly replied the mother; "but I always did like to see when folks go by, or when anybody's comin'. I s'pose it's foolish, an' mebbe it's selfish too—I dunno but 'tis. I don't need to see the road, an' when I want to, I can go out of doors." There was silence for a few moments, broken only by an occasional rattle of the loose windows. Mrs. Bryan drummed softly on the chair arm with her fingers. She was trying to imagine how it would seem to have the front door face north instead of west; to look from her favorite window into the barn-yard, and to have no roses to shed their fragrance about her kitchen door.

"My settin'-room winder'll open on the barn-yard, won't it, Hetty?" To be snatched from her towering castles in the air to the barn-yard, caused a frown to flit over the fair, young face. The mother saw and hastened to dispel it.

"It'll be comp'ny fer me to watch the hens, an' I can see to 'em better to be right there by 'em." She wanted to ask Hetty about the rose bushes, but she was afraid of offending her, and she had become so thoroughly convinced of her

own innate selfishness, that she had firmly resolved to root it out at any cost. Consequently, she decided to crucify self by saying nothing about having the rose bushes dug up and transplanted beside her kitchen door. No doubt, Hetty loved them as well as she, and the place was hers; she ought to have them if she wanted them, and it would be mean and selfish to ask for them.

Hetty walked out into the kitchen and seated herself by the window. She wished to visit undisturbed her castles in Spain.

"I wonder what Lijy 'd think of all this," murmured Jane, as she gazed into the blue of the distant hills she had learned to love so well. "'Pears to me I ain't never missed him so much since he passed over. Poor Lijy! He built this house with his own hands when we was first married, an' he made some o' the furniture too. He made the kitchen table, an' the sink, an' the wash bench, an' the clothes chest, an' he put a new rocker on this very chair I'm a settin' in. It got broke off when we moved. One o' the men—'twas Jake Rice, he's dead now, poor feller—set the chair down close to the wagon wheel, when they was unloadin' right in front the door, an' the horses backed a little,

an' the wheel run right on to that rocker an' broke it square off. 'Twas all the rockin' chair we had." She leaned over to one side and looked at the rocker that had never been painted. The rest of the chair was brown, but on the seat and arms the paint was nearly worn off. The unpainted rocker was longer than the other one.

"I told Lijy, jest as soon as he'd got it done, that 'twas too long. I remember jest how he looked when I tol' him—he hadn't noticed it—I can see him yet with the color creepin' over his cheeks, and when I saw how it plagued him, I said, 'Oh, never mind, Lijy, nobody 'll ever notice it;' an' he said, 'no, nobody 'll ever notice it, Jane,' then he kissed me an' we went out to supper—I had supper all ready. We had warm biscuits an' honey that night—I remember jest how that honey tasted, an' how Lijy did praise my biscuits. After supper Lijy put away his tools—they was all new then an' he was dretful choice of 'em. He hung the saw, bright as a new dollar, up behind the kitchen stove so it wouldn't rust. I remember I thought at the time how smart Lijy was. I never would 'a' thought of hangin' a saw behind a kitchen stove to keep it bright. He hung a coat over it, one

he didn't wear much, an' when he took down the saw to use it a week or two later, it was red with rust. Neither of us thought of the steam from the teakettle. Young folks has lots to learn when they start a new home.

"We use' to have a good deal o' comp'ny in them days, an' everybody noticed the new rocker to the chair, an' most everybody spoke about its bein' too long. We admitted that 'twas, and Lijy, with a side wink at me, would always say, 'yes, 'tis a leetle too long, but it'll never be noticed,' and they'd all agree with him.

"After they'd gone home Lijy'd laugh and say to me, sez he, 'Jane, it's easy to lead folks if ye've only got tack.' I don't jest know what tack is, but Lijy did. Dear me, I shall never forgit the day Mahetabel was born, right there in that little bedroom. I never see a man so tickled in all my life as Lijy was. He jest hung over me and kissed me an' kissed—"

"Mother, ain't we going to have any supper to night? It's six o'clock."

"Why, for massy sakes alive! if I didn't forgit all about your supper, Mahetabel," and Mrs. Bryan bustled about the kitchen putting the teakettle on the cold stove and then spreading the table-cloth.

“Mother, do you talk all the time when there’s no one in the house but yourself? Who do you talk to?”

“I don’t know I’m reely talkin’, Mahetabel, it seems as if I jest think out loud. Was I talkin’ jes’ now?”

“Yes. You just called me Mahetabel, mother; what made you? I thought you’d forgotten it.”

“Why—ye see—Hetty, I was jest thinkin’ about when ye was little, an’ yer pa was alive, an’ you was Mahetabel then.”

“Well, mother!” said Hetty breaking into a merry laugh, “when do you expect that water to boil? You haven’t lit the fire.”

“Well, I dew declare!” said Mrs. Bryan striking a match on a griddle. “I dunno what ails me lately; I jest get to thinkin,’ and clean forgit where I be.”

Hetty had gained her point; she could afford to laugh. She sat gazing out of the window without speaking until the teakettle began to hum and sing; she was wandering through her castle halls. Mrs. Bryan was slicing some cold boiled potatoes into some hot melted butter that was sputtering in a frying-pan on the stove.

“We shall have next to the nicest house in Pepperton, mother, and the very nicest yard.

We shall have the house built near the corner, so as to have most of the yard on one side, like Judge Brown's house in Glenwood. I'm going to have all those rose bushes dug up and have a design in old hen and chickens in the front yard, and all the rest just smooth green grass like Judge Brown's." A thrill of gladness went through the mother's heart, for which she immediately upbraided herself, choking down an exclamation of delight. She silently ejaculated "Oh, how selfish I be! I won't ask for 'em, I won't unless I find she don't want 'em." With her mind on the rose bushes, the rest of Hetty's remark was a little vague.

"I think you're reel sensible, Hetty, in decidin' to let the hens and chickens run in the front yard, it makes a place look so much more home-like to see hens about, an' they do love to peck at the green grass. They lay better, too, when they're not shut up. I'm reel glad you've changed yer mind. Now Prudence Tolbert's got thirty hens—an'—why what be you laughin' at, Hetty? Don't, child, it'll make ye sick. You'll go off into hysterics sure's the world. Your Aunt Clar'sy did once, jest from laughin'; she couldn't stop when she wanted to."

Mahetabel wiped her eyes. She rarely gave way to fits of laughter, but the days of
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controversy about moving the house had made her a little nervous; her mother had never been so stubborn, so unyielding.

"I'm not going to turn the hens loose in the front yard, mother, they'd spoil everything. You didn't understand. There's a plant called 'old hen and chickens.' I'm going to have a figure made of it, some such as we saw in the park at Glenwood. Don't you remember those stars an' anchors an' things?"

Mrs. Bryan flushed and poked the fire without replying; the kitchen stove had always stood a dumb sponsor for all her mistakes and mortifications.

The long New England winter had melted away under the wooing breath of spring, and Pepperton had blossomed into a bower of lilacs and fruit flowers. The woods were damp with recent rains, and the air was sweet with the odor of violets.

Mahetabel and her young husband had moved into their new house, which had turned out to be the largest as well as the handsomest in the village. The second story rooms, with the exception of the windows, were unfurnished, as the increased size of the house and numerous

exterior decorations—not counted upon in the original plan—had encroached seriously upon the funds set aside for furniture; but with lace curtains and shades at every window the home was complete, to all external appearances. The house was built with two wings and painted white with bright green window blinds and a red brick foundation. Four lightning rods with burnished points, glass balls and gleaming arrows flashed in the sunlight. A gardener from Glenwood was preparing a mound, where the rose bushes had stood, to be decorated with “old hen and chickens.”

The little red house had been moved into a back corner of the yard. Mrs. Bryan was busy setting out the rose bushes beside her kitchen door. She had just returned after an absence of three days; her mother had died suddenly “of old age,” and she had been to the funeral. While she was away the gardener had dug up the rose bushes and thrown them out back of the barn.

“I’m afraid they won’t live, Em’ly,” said Mrs. Bryan, as she patted the dirt down about the roots with her old, brown hands. “Ye see the gard’ner didn’t know they was to be transplanted an’ he’s cut the roots most all off, then

they've been layin' out there in the hot sun an' wind till it 'pears like they're mos' dead. I shell give 'em plenty o' water an' mebbe—"

"Why didn't Hetty see to it?" and there was an unpleasant ring in Em'ly's voice. Mrs. Bryan noticed it and replied quickly:

"Oh, Hetty didn't know it; she was busy fixin' her pictures up; she was dretful sorry. I do hope I can make this yellow one live. It was Lijy's favorite; he planted it with his own hands when it wa'n't more than three inches long."

"You can't git your kitchen door open, can you, Jane? The house is too close in the corner. What a shame!"

"No, I can't open the kitchen door but jest a leetle ways—it hits the fence; but I can open the front door ye see, Em'ly; there's plenty o' room t' open the front door," and Mrs. Bryan smiled so radiantly that Emily felt for the moment to chide herself for not having properly appreciated the privilege of being able to open her own front door.

"Well, I must go, Jane, good-by, I hope yer rose bushes 'll live."

"Good-by, Em'ly, come over again. How happy that child is with her new house; it jes' tickles me to see her," said Mrs. Bryan as she seated herself on a tilting wooden box that

served her as a front door-step; the old steps having fallen to pieces when the men pried them up to move the house. "I've seen her at that parlor winder three times today a loopin' up that lace curtain an' there she's at it agin. I do hope it'll last,—sometimes it don't;" and Jane's head sank slowly over to one side till her cheek rested on the end of her forefinger. "Oscar's mos' too good lookin'—I wish he wa'n't quite so good lookin'—Lijy was good lookin', too, poor Lijy. Joshua Jameson was a good, clever feller, but he wa'n't nothin' like so good lookin' as Lijy.

"Dear me suz, how I wish I could open that kitchen door! I wonder if I couldn't hev a little winder cut in it so I could see the hills. Me 'n' Lijy walked all the way to them hills the fus' Sunday after we was married. I wouldn't b'lieve they was three mile away, but they be. I said I knew 't I c'd walk tew 'em in ten minutes. Dear 'me suz! How Lijy did laugh at me that day! I kin mos' see him yet."

The long, hot summer was past and Mrs. Oscar Wadham's beautiful mound, the envy of all Pepperton, lay under a blanket of snow. A thin, lazy column of bluesmoke rose from the little red house in the corner, and an uneven

fringe of icicles hung from the low roof. The old woman sat beside the kitchen stove sewing some braided rags into a floor mat. She was just finishing it off. It was to be a Christmas present for her daughter.

“ ’Tain’t anything very nice—’tain’t good ’nough to put in the house, but she can lay it on the side porch to wipe feet on; it’ll save her new bristle carpet, an’ then if they’s a good mat to wipe feet on, mebbe she won’t hev to keep newspaper spread down in front of all the chairs. A carpet don’t look as if ’twas made to walk on that’s got bunches o’ roses an’ vi’lets scattered all over it.

“I dunno what to do about tearin’ up this ole red shawl. It’d make sech a pretty stripe to finish off with. It’s full o’ little holes,” and she held it up toward the window and looked at it. “Yes, it’s awful full o’ little holes, an’ the fringe is purt’ nigh all wore off. Lijy use’ ter—like it. Dear me suz! I dunno what to do about it.” She held it up to the light again. “It’s all full o’ holes, an’ it’ll make sech a pretty finishin’ off stripe.” She picked up the shears with a determined air, clipped the shawl and tore off a strip, clipped again. But just as she was about to tear off the second strip, the heavy plaster in

the ceiling, that had been loosened when the house was moved and had hung for weeks in a threatening bulge, fell with a crash, striking the old woman senseless to the floor.

Two days and nights she lay in an unconscious stupor, during which time Mahetabel never left her side, either to eat or sleep. She was heart-broken.

"You mustn't cry so, Hetty, you'll make yourself sick."

"I can't help it, Aunt Em'ly, you don't know. Nobody knows how careless I've been with mother." Mahetabel's eyes were swollen with weeping and loss of sleep.

"If she gets well"—a great sob choked the young woman's utterance—"will she get well, Aunt Em'ly? If she gets well, I shall move the old house back just where it was before—where the mound is—I don't want a mound—I don't care how it looks—I'll turn the hens loose, too."

By the doctor's orders, Mahetabel was finally forced to her own room, where she lay moaning in troubled sleep and muttering broken words of self condemnation during the entire night.

Mrs. Bryan's bed had been moved out into the sitting-room, the bedroom was too small, where she lay facing the kitchen door. Her

sister, Clarissa Carley, had come to take care of her. It was almost daylight. Clarissa had just blown out the candle and set it away.

Mrs. Bryan opened her eyes, looked up rationally and whispered; Clarissa bent low over her.

"What is it, Jane?" Clarissa was trembling. She hoped her sister would not wake up "out of her head;" nothing terrified the nervous little woman more than delirium. She thought it a sure sign of approaching death.

"Sh—h—h! don't talk so loud, Clar'sy, you'll wake the baby."

Clarissa looked puzzled and before she had time to collect her thoughts asked "what baby?"

Jane gave a little sneer.

"How silly you be, Clar'sy, why, my baby, of course—Mahetabel. She was moanin' all night an' I want ye to let her sleep jest as long as she will. I had a bad dream las' night, Clar'sy, I thought—is they anything the matter with me, Clar'sy? My head feels queer; be I sick?"

"You ain't very well, Jane."

"I thought I wa'n't, my head feels queer—dretful queer." Then she closed her eyes as if she were going to sleep.

"Clar'sy!" The sister returned to the bed.

"What is it, Jane?"

"Is the house turned round?"

"No, the house's all right, Jane; see if ye can't sleep a little." Clarissa was anxious to put a stop to the questions.

"No, Clar'sy, I don't want to sleep. I have sech bad dreams. Every time I go to sleep, I dream the house was washed away by a flood, an' it lodged up in the corner o' the fence so I couldn't open the kitchen door; but the kitchen door's wide open, ain't it? I can see right out o' doors. How nice an' green everything looks, an' them yellor roses air all in bloom ain't they?"

Prudence Tolbert stepped cat-like into the house. She had just run over before breakfast to see how Mrs. Bryan was, and bring a glass of her red currant jelly. Prudence was famous for her jams and jellies.

"How is she?" whispered Prudence, setting the jelly on the bureau.

"I think she's dyin'; she's beginnin' to see things; she says the kitchen door's wide open," and Clarissa wiped her weak eyes. "I think we'd better call Hetty and send for the doctor, don't you, Prudence?"

Prudence bent over the woman, who seemed in a deep sleep. She listened to her breathing and touched the thin hands with the back of her fingers.

“Yes, I guess she’s dyin’, poor thing. Dear me! Clar’sy, her cap ain’t on straight. I’ll jes’ pull it roun’ a leetle mite, careful,” and she proceeded to straighten the cap and retie the strings into a neat bow. Prudence was very particular; she had always liked Mrs. Bryan and she couldn’t bear to think of her friend appearing at the judgment with her cap on crooked.

“Now I’ll slip over quick an’ call Hetty. You jes’ stay right here by her, Clar’sy.”

The sick woman lay all day and all night in a trance-like sleep. Mahetabel, with a pale, sad face and tearless eyes sat beside her mother, stroking her thin hands and administering the few little comforts she required. There was now no outward show of grief; it had settled down into her woman’s heart, and in her sad eyes burned the light of a new-born consciousness.

Just as the golden morning sun had kissed to tears the frost ferns on the little window panes, the dying woman opened her eyes and looked towards the kitchen door. A happy smile spread over her face, the brightest, happiest smile Mahetabel had ever seen her wear.

“Why, there’s Lijy, standin’—right in the kitchen door! Leave—the door open—Lijy, I want to see—the hills.”

TOLLIVER'S FOOL

TOLLIVER'S FOOL

They sat on the green hillside that overlooked their humble home in the valley. The long tree-shadows dappled the noisy brook that swirled swiftly by, over white, mossy stones.

"How can you sit there and read, Mandy, when there's so much to see and hear that's real—that's not made up out of nothing?" Faith lay on the grass, with her folded hands under the back of her head. She was listening, with half closed eyes, to the low music of the brook, the mingled tones of the cow bells down in the valley, and the tinkle of approaching sheep bells.

"Listen, Mandy, listen," she said. "That's a new cow bell, as sure as the world. Or, mebbe it's a new cow. Do you s'pose 'tis?"

"I'm sure I don't know, and I'm sure I don't care if it is. Now you listen to me a minute, Faith, and do try to understand and appreciate these last three verses. I'll read them over twice." And Amanda read and reread the last three stanzas of Tennyson's Brook.

"Now, tell me honestly, Faith, can you see no beauty and hear no music in that?"

"Why," replied the younger sister, pulling up a handful of tender grass, "It's beautiful enough, and I like the sound of it. If I had to stay in the house all the time like Mary Conley, I should like to read such things; it'd be like looking at a picture of outdoors; but I'd a good deal rather be out doors. I just hate that old rag of a book of yours."

"Faith! I'm astonished. I'm glad no one heard that remark but your sister. It's awful; I'm ashamed of you."

"Well, you've never been the same since you've had that book. We don't have a bit of fun any more. You used to play tag with me, and lots of things. Now you read, read, read, all the time, 'most, an' I'm as lonesome as lonesome," Faith sobbed out. "I hate your old book, so I do. I wish it'd git burnt up." Amanda took one of her sister's hands and stroked it.

"You don't understand, Faithie. I'm a woman now; I'm past seventeen. You couldn't, at least you oughtn't to expect me to enjoy playing tag as I used to. I hunger after learning. I feel as if I shall die if I can't have it. You're a child yet; only fourteen. You can't understand my feelings."

Faith felt convicted; she did not understand fully, but her heart yearned towards her sister, and she also felt that she would be willing to endure almost anything if she could understand, and live again in the same world with Amanda.

"I would suffer any privation to get learning, Faith," pursued Amanda. "I don't care for the work of it. I'd rather die getting education than to live without it; that's the truth."

"Then you're going to have it, Mandy, that's what you are. I'll see to it myself," declared Faith with vehemence.

"I want to graduate, Faith, graduate at a high school." Amanda spoke the word "graduate" as if it stood for the very acme of learning, and were not to be mentioned by uninitiated lips above a whisper.

"Then I should know just about everything that's worth knowing; I could quote poetry by the hour."

Faith gazed at her sister doubtfully. "Is that what folks go to school an' graduate for? to cote portry?"

"No, not for that alone. I could earn oceans and oceans of money teaching school if I could graduate. And Faith, when I think how awful poor we are, and that I can never graduate, but must live down there in that little grey shanty

of a house, and cook, and wash, and scrub, and churn till my life ends, I feel desperate. I don't know but I shall jump into the creek some day an' drown myself. It worries me."

"Oh, no you won't, Mandy," said Faith in perfect seriousness, "you couldn't; it ain't deep enough. But if I was you, whenever I begun to feel desprit, I'd put on one o' my old dresses. If you should happen to jump in with your best one on, it would never look starchy again, and it'd most likely always smell of frogs and pollywogs."

"You see, Faith, I'm wasting my life. I have a fine mind. Elder Garland said so to Aunt Hannah; I heard him; and he said 't would be a pity if I couldn't have a chance. Now, how am I going to get it? There ain't any use in our going to school any longer as we've been going: you a day and I a day. One of us ought to go every day. Now, which of us do you think ought to go, Faith? Aunt Hannah argues that our chances ought to be equal; that's why I am kept out of school every other day. Now, you don't hunger after learning, do you, Faith? You've never felt like drowning yourself on account of it, have you?"

Faith gazed at the dimpling water and shook her head.

"You don't care to graduate, do you?"

Faith fixed her eyes on the hated copy of Tennyson that lay in her sister's lap and frankly admitted that she did not.

Drawing her lips into a line of determination, she looked up at her sister through the tangled curls of yellow hair that hung over her eyes like the foretop of an unkempt colt.

"I'll 'range it for you, Mandy. I'll tell Daddy and Aunt Hannah that I don't want to go to school any more; that I just won't. Then you c'n go every day till you graduate an' can't learn any more. I c'n go, after you—"

"Do you mean it, Faithie? Do you really think you could do all the work and take care of Wallie, too?"

"Yes, I can an' I will. If you want to go off an' graduate an' learn how to cote portry, why go. I may have some trouble with Wallie; sometimes he runs away, you know. But maybe he won't run away any more. Don't you think he's a little mite better than he used to be, Mandy? Uncle Dick thinks he is. Uncle Dick says he's not half such an idiot as we think him. He's very bright about some things, you know. Say, Mandy! don't you think he's a little mite better than he was? Poor little brother!"

"No, I think he's worse. Anyway, the foolish

things he does didn't seem so bad in a little child. He's a big boy now, and people expect more of him. I believe his fits are getting worse, too. He had three last week."

"No, Mandy, only two."

"Yes, he had one, an awful one while you were over to Aunt Hannah's." Amanda turned suddenly and faced her sister. "I s'pose you'll think I'm desperately wicked, Faith, but I can't help it. The fact is I almost hate Wallie; that's the truth. He keeps me from school, and every time any one comes in, he makes me so ashamed. Last Sunday, when Mr. Curtice called, Wallie acted the worst I ever knew him to. I tried to get him to go out and play; I offered him everything; but not a step would he go. He felt in all Mr. Curtice's pockets and turned them wrong side out; then he climbed upon the bureau and crowed like a rooster. I could have cried. He acted better after you came home from meeting."

"Wallie knows you don't love him, Mandy. Poor brother! It wasn't his fault that mother dropped him. It might 'a' been you or I as well as Wallie. I guess mother's glad we're kind to her poor, little, hurt baby—I know she is."

"You don't know any such thing, Faith. How absurd!"

"I tell you I do. I can feel her bending over me sometimes when I'm going to sleep, and sometimes she kisses me. I can feel it as plain as anything. Then when I wash, I don't wash that spot; I wash all round it. When she kisses me again, I wash off the old kiss and leave the new one; so I get my face washed all over after awhile."

"Faith Tolliver! What a little silly you are!"

Faith had risen and was wading slowly through the brook. A few flirting minnows nibbled warily at her toes; she watched them, smiling.

"Come, hurry, Faith. Don't stop to play. It's supper time now, and there comes Daddy. I'll come just the minute I finish reading these last six verses. Come, Faith, hurry, or I sha'n't believe you can do all the work. You can't, either, if you go on playing like a child."

"Oh, Mandy! Look at the clouds. Pure white snow drifts,—and pink ones and gold,—Oh, Mandy! Look at that big one; it's all on fire—and look at the—"

"Faith! Are you going to get supper, or shall I have to go?"

For reply, the little girl stepped upon the bank, shook out her skirts and bounded away, her hair flying.

Alexander Tolliver, with his wooden leg stretched out before him, sat on the kitchen lounge. His little daughter was obliged to step over the leg as she walked back and forth from the cupboard to the table.

"Uncle Dick offered to buy her books, did you say, Faithful?"

"Yes, he offered that a long time ago. He knows Mandy's got a fine mind; everybody says so."

"Who said so, Faithful? Who do you mean by everybody?" asked the old man, laying his newspaper on the lounge beside him.

"Why Elder Garland said so, for one. Mandy heard him. Everybody knows Mandy's got a head for books an' I ain't got any at all; it's just wasting time for me to go to school. I don't care a mite for portry, an' never shall. Mandy can earn oceans and oceans of money after she gits through graduating, and then she's going to learn me how to talk proper."

"Daddy's afeard you can't do all the work, Faithful, an' take care o' little brother, too. And brother must have good care. Come here, Wallie, an' set on Daddy's lap."

"Yes I can do all the work too, Daddy. It'll be easy. I'm stronger than I look." And

Faith picked up a pail of water that her father had just brought in, and set it on the other end of the bench, giving him a side glance.

"You've no idee how strong I be. Just feel o' my arm."

"Yes, you've got a powerful arm, Faithful, an' no mistake—feels 'bout like the leg of a spring chicken." Faith pouted, then laughed, as she sawed off slices of bread, holding the loaf against her breast.

Amanda came in with her books just as her father and sister were sitting down to supper.

"So you're reely bent on goin' off to school, be ye, Mandy?" The color in Amanda's cheeks deepened.

"Why, Faith thinks she can get along without me, Daddy, and everybody thinks I ought to go to school."

"Everybody, eh? Wa'al, but how 'bout Faithful goin' to school? Is she to grow up an' know nothin'?"

The color in Amanda's cheeks again deepened and spread.

"Faith is younger than I am, Daddy. She can go after I get through."

"Wa'al, I don't see no objection to that plan, if it suits Faithful, an' I guess it does. You c'n

go, then, Mandy. I guess we'll git along some way, but we'll miss ye, terrible." The old man's eyes were misty.

Alexander Tolliver was married late in life to a fair young girl less than half his age. Faith was her living image. The newly married couple had started in life with very little means. A year or two later the bread winner had met with an accident that cost him a leg. Nevertheless, they had rented the little farm in the valley, finally bought it, and the struggle of their life had been to get it paid for. Their second child, Wallace, when about two years old, sprang, in play, from his mother's arms, and, striking his head on an iron fender, received an injury that nearly cost him his life, and from which he had never fully recovered. The young mother died six months later, blaming herself to the last for the accident which she felt fully convinced had irreparably dimmed the bright intellect of her beautiful little son.

The crown of Faith's yellow head was buried in the flank of a black cow. She had given Wallie a cup of warm milk, and he was down on his knees trying to drink it like a cat.

"Get up, Wallie, quick. Somebody's coming. Get up, dear, please."

"Good evening, Miss Faith."

"Good evening, Mr. Garland."

A young man leaned on the barn-yard fence, hat in hand. His face was slightly flushed from rapid walking, and he smiled pleasantly as he wiped his damp forehead. Faith looked up at him through her hair.

"Won't you come in, Mr. Garland? Daddy'll be back pretty soon, he's just gone a little way after a load of wood. There he comes over the hill, now."

"No, thank you, Miss Faith. I stopped a moment to speak to you, and to ask if you've heard from Amanda yet." Caleb Garland blushed as he spoke Amanda's name. He was better acquainted with her than he was with Faith.

"Yes, we had a letter from her yesterday. She likes it; she says she was never so happy in her life."

"Good! I'm glad she likes it. I felt sure she would, though. I know all about the Hazen School, Miss Faith; I've been through it."

Faith had set her pail of milk down beside her, and stood facing the young man. She gazed at him with parted lips and fixed eyes.

"Did you," she stopped to swallow, "graduate, Mr. Garland?"

"Yes, Miss Faith. I graduated at the Hazen high school five years ago; before I entered the University."

If there was a world between these two young persons a moment before, there were two worlds between them now. Faith gazed at the young man as if he were miles away.

"I s'pose you can cote portry by the hour," said she at last.

"Do you like poetry, Miss Faith?"

"No, I hate it."

"So do I. That is, I'm not so very fond of it; I prefer good prose."

Both worlds were swept away.

All of that evening, as Faith hurried about her work, she murmured between snatches of song: "He hates portry, and so do I."

It was the last week in September. Amanda had been at school three weeks, and she was coming home for the first time to stay over Sunday. Faith had finished her baking, washed the windows and scrubbed the knotty floors of the two rooms down stairs; now she was sweeping the dooryard out as far as the ground was hard and grassless. Wallie, who was now sixteen years of age, had climbed into a tree and

was shrieking and howling like an enraged wild animal. Faith walked to the tree and looked up.

"Wallie, won't you come down now? Mandy's coming home by and by. Come down, like a good boy, and put on your shoes and some clean clothes." Faith's voice was soft and pleading. The boy sat still with his lips in an obstinate pout.

"Come, Wallie. Come down and put on some clean clothes and play you're a boy, just for this afternoon, and be sitting in a chair when Mandy comes. It'll surprise her. You shake hands with her when she comes in, and say, 'how are you,' just like a boy—just like Tommy Blake. If you will, Faithie will give you a warm cooky and a lump of sugar,—two cookies and two lumps of sugar," added Faith, clapping her hands in assumed merriment.

"No, won't. Won't be a boy. Won't be a boy. Won't put clothes on. Wallie's a bad old cat. Cross old cat." And he climbed higher in the tree, clawed at the branches, and howled more viciously than ever.

The thing that impressed one on seeing Wallie the first time was that his eyes were much too large for his little, pale face. Beauti-

ful dark eyes they were—so like his father's and Amanda's—but they were always wavering. He seemed unable to fix them upon anything.

Mr. Benjamin Curtice had driven Amanda home in his new top buggy. They sat in the "front room" laughing and talking of their common acquaintances in Hazen.

The day was bright, and as much of the sunshine as could get in through the little windows, lay in squares on the clean, bare floor. Fresh asparagus hung around the looking-glass, and a tumbler of garden flowers stood on the table. Amanda was giving an account of her first day in school. Faith had hard work to keep her merriment within the bounds of good taste; she thought it the most amusing experience she had ever heard of. She was proud of her sister's wit, and of her beauty.

Mr. Curtice, his head bent forward, was also listening, with alternate smiles and laughter. Amanda had a charming way of relating things. They were all laughing gaily when Wallie came in dressed in his best and dragging his old clothes by a suspender.

The moment the boy discovered there was company, he dropped the clothes and started upon his usual round of exhibitions, beginning

with the forage of pockets, which were invariably turned wrong side out.

Intervention on the part of his sisters only made matters worse. If the pockets contained nothing that happened to please him, the unfortunate possessor of them was made to suffer accordingly. There was only a card-case, a purse, some toothpicks and a few letters in Mr. Curtice's pockets. Wallie had no desire for such things. He threw them down and walked out of doors with a disgusted look on his face.

A few minutes later, while Mr. Curtice was leaning forward to look at some pictures in an album that lay on Amanda's lap, Wallie stepped up cautiously from behind them and dropped a hand full of burs inside the young man's collar.

Amanda burst into tears of shame and vexation. Faith, with dilated nostrils and firmly compressed lips, coaxingly pushed her brother out of doors and played "pig" with him till supper time.

What with the sobs of the girl by his side, and the sand-burs under his collar, the visitor was greatly distressed. He soothed Amanda as best he could, assuring her that he rather enjoyed the boy's pranks; that children would be children, and he hoped she would not let it

disturb her in the least. It soon occurred to him, however, that he had agreed to meet a friend at the Corners and must, accordingly, take his leave at once. Amanda started the conversation when she sat down to supper.

"Aunt Hannah came to see me this week, father, and—she—among other things, we talked about Wallie."

"Wa'al, what of it? What did 'mount to?" asked the father, without raising his eyes from his plate.

"She thinks it is your duty to put him into a home for the weak-minded; there's one at Well-wood." Faith dropped her knife and fork and looked at her sister with pain in her beautiful eyes.

"Of course you didn't agree with her, Mandy. I'm surprised at Aunt Hannah."

"No, not exactly; but I think we ought to try it for a few months or a year, and if we didn't like it we could take him away. What do you say, father? You see it might benefit the child, and he is such a care."

"Not much to you, Mandy," replied Faith in a strained voice.

"Now, Faith, don't be foolish and sentimental. We have some rights as young ladies, and I can have no pleasure in home when we have such

scenes as we had this afternoon every time any one comes in."

The old man cleared his throat and bent lower over his plate, but said nothing.

"Besides, you can't have company, Faith; neither can you go anywhere. You can't go out of sight of the house, and it's not good for you. Aunt Hannah says you'll never amount to anything if you stay here cooped up with that child all the time, with no one to talk to but him. And you know"—Faith could remain silent no longer.

"It don't make one mite of difference to me, Mandy, what Aunt Hannah thinks. Wallie ain't her brother; he's mine; an' I'm going to take care of him just as long as he lives, whether I amount to anything or not. I'm sorry, very sorry, you can't have any pleasure in coming home." Faith's hand shook as she stirred her tea.

"What do you think, father?"

"I think just as Faith does, Mandy. Wallie b'longs t'us, an' not t'other folks. There ain't no tellin' how they'd use him down there to that Wellwood home. Mebbe he'd git enough t'eat, an' mebbe he wouldn't; jes' as Faith says."

Amanda leaned back in her chair, and with an ill-concealed effort to speak calmly, said:

"You think altogether of Wallie, father, and not at all of us girls. Faith'll grow stupid."

"I won't," protested Faith, spiritedly, her cheeks growing red.

"It is kinder hard on you girls, that's a fact. I wonder what his mother'd say. I allus wonder what she'd say."

"I know what she'd say," asserted the younger sister, averting her face to hide her tears, "an' I know what she'd do. If her poor, little, hurt baby was sent away from home to live with folks that didn't love him, she'd go along and take care of him, and that's just what I shall do if he's sent away."

The discussion ended here. Tolliver's fool, as he was called by the boys in the neighborhood, was not sent to the Wellwood Home.

Three years had gone since Amanda entered the high school. She stood well in her classes, and no scholar gave better promise of a brilliant finish.

Faith sat under the big tree by the gate, sewing. It was a bright June afternoon, and the bees that swarmed about the blossom-laden rose bush at her back, crawled unmolested over her busy hands, and waded toppling through her yellow hair. There was a sound of wheels and she looked up. A white horse hitched to

an old-fashioned buggy was coming up the road. An old woman with short iron grey curls and a martyr expression, sat in the middle of the seat flapping the loose lines. She clucked and chirped alternately, with an occasional "git app, Madge." The old mare showed her appreciation of these attentions by turning her ears back now and again to catch the sound, but this action had no perceptible effect upon her gait. There seemed to be a tacit understanding between horse and driver that a certain amount of urging should be gone through with as a matter of form.

Faith walked to the gate and opened it when she saw that her Aunt Hannah was coming in.

"Makin' white aprons, eh, Faithful? What be ye makin' them on? Why, ain't this the stuff 't yer aunt 'Lis'beth give yer fer a dress, on yer las' birthday?"

"Yes."

"Why, you don't tell me! You'd ruther hev aprons than a dress, hey?"

"They ain't for me; they're for Mandy. All the girls at school wear white aprons and Mandy hasn't one; not one, and I don't need a new white dress. I shouldn't wear it if I had it. And what would be the use? No one ever sees me."

"Now that's jest what I'm a comin' to. You

never see nobody, and never will, so long as you're tied up with that poor boy. Now I think, an' everybody thinks, Wallie ought to be sent away to the Wellwood Hum. The continual worrytin' about what might happen to you when you're all 'lone with that boy, is jes' breakin' of me down. 'Tain't nothin' else that's gi'n me this rackin' agony in my left leg; nothin' else in the wide world; an' the misery in my stummick is gettin' wuss 'n' wuss every day. I feel jes's if I can't stan' it much longer."

"I'm sorry you feel so, Aunt Hannah, for Wallie is not going to be sent away. We've talked it over, and it's all settled." There was a note in Faith's voice that was convincing, and the subject was discussed no further.

Hannah Weaver was sixty-eight. She had been, in her mind, tottering on the verge of the grave for thirty years, always growing rapidly worse. She delighted in conversations on diseases and death. Nothing displeased her more than to be told that she looked well. She had a particular penchant for new diseases, and especially for those with unpronounceable names.

When there were no new and aristocratic maladies stalking about, she would reluctantly fall back upon the "misery" in her "stummick" and the agony in her left leg.

“Wa'al, it ain't fer me to insist on it, Faithful, if you 'n' yer Pa have settled it, an' I ain't goin' tew. I sha'n't last much longer, nohow; I'm failin' dretful fast. I've been thinkin' lately that I'd ort to get everything ready, for there ain't no knowin'—”

“Why I thought you had everything ready, Aunt Hannah. Your shroud's all made, isn't it? And your lace cap, and your long, white stockings, and—”

“Yes, but they's a good many other things to ten' to. I wish you'd see to it, Faithful, after I'm dead an' gone, that there's something about this, on my grave stun.” And Hannah spread her hands over as much as she could of her ample bosom. “Not bein' able to find out what the folks died with, robs me of all the pleasure of visitin' graveyards.”

Faith's eyes opened wide.

“You don't mean about your stomach—your misery, Aunt Hannah? You don't want anything about that on your grave stone, do you?”

“Not exactly that. You needn't tell where the pain was. I'd rather have folks stan' at my grave an' wonder than to hev 'em know jest where 'twas. Somethin' like this'd read well, I think. ‘She suffered all the pain that human flesh is heir to.’ Or, if they ain't room for all

that, you might put on, just under the name an' date, 'she was a great sufferer.' Or, if you like it better, you might make it read, 'She bore her suff'rin's like a martyr,' or, 'without a murmur,' if you don't like the word 'martyr.' Or, 'she bore 'em without complaint.' That would be best of all, an' it's only five words: 'She,' one; 'bore,' two; 'them,' three; 'without,' four; 'complaint,' five." Faith stiffened her lips and did her best to maintain a serious expression.

"That'd never do, Aunt Hannah. Never do in the world. You'll have to tell what you bore; folks might think 'twas children, an' you never had any. I'll fix it though; I'll write a verse for you. I'll run in and get Daddy's pencil an' write it now, so you can take it home with you." Faith came back from the house walking very slowly, and with regular motion. She was evidently stepping off the poetry. Her struggle with the muse had made wrinkles between her eyes.

"Don't speak to me, Aunt Hannah, and I'd rather you wouldn't even look at me." Hannah turned her eyes towards the meadow and fixed them upon a crow that sat pluming himself on the branch of a dead tree.

"I've thought of one line already," remarked the poet. "It ends with woe; misery and woe."

The old lady smiled and her face depicted perfect satisfaction with the first line.

"How does this sound, Aunt Hannah? I think I've got it all in now, an' there's only two lines." And raising her head, Faith read:

"She has gone from a world of misery and woe,
To a place she has always been dying to go."

"They ain't nothin' in 'bout the pain, Faithful," observed Hannah, with a doubtful look.

"Well, I've got "misery" in it, and that's about the same; it really means more; it might be all kinds o' trouble. You couldn't have much more in; it has to be carved in the stone, you know. It would cost too much."

"Wa'al, mebbe that'll do jest as 'tis, then. Read it again, slow."

Faith's head, faintly seconded by the old lady's, beat time to the rhythmic accent of the lines as they were read.

"Beautiful, Faithful. I hope they'll put that in the 'Argus' after I'm gone: You must see to it. I sh'd think that'd tech anybody that's got any feller feelin's. That portry'll bring out the hankchiffs if anything will. That'll show 'em 't I didn't want this wicked world fer my eternal abidin' place. You must go to school some more, Faithful; you reely must."

The young girl watched her aunt with an abstracted gaze as she drove away.

"How that buggy top swops over to one side," thought Faith. "I can remember when there was a little square of glass in the back curtain where the hole is, and there was green fringe all around inside; and there was a little looking-glass on the ladies' side, and a foot cushion. I wish Aunt Hannah'd roll up that curtain, and not let it hang out at the back, flapping and swinging like a sheet on a line." With a deep sigh the young girl reseated herself, picked up her sewing, and looked hard at the point of her needle.

"I wish I could go to school," she said to her needle. "I believe I will try to go after Mandy comes home. She can take care of Wallie an' Daddy, and let me go, at least a year. Everybody thinks Wallie's better than he was, and I need to go; I'm shamefully ignorant. Caleb said something the other day about the Zulus. I don't even know who they are, where they live, or whether they're men or beasts."

It was Friday afternoon. Amanda had just come home to stay over Sunday.

"I'm so glad you've got your dress, Mandy. I don't believe I could have saved enough out

of the butter and egg money in a year to get you a decent one. I've been trying for three months and how much do you think I have? One dollar and twenty-eight cents. Now, that you have your dress, how would it do for me to use this money to get enough goods to make a new waist to my white dress, so I could go to school the day you graduate? Couldn't I? Say, Mandy, couldn't I?" Faith gave her sister a little push.

"That'll get my gloves," murmured Amanda. She had not heard a word her sister had said beyond the dollar and twenty-eight cents.

"What, Mandy? The dollar and twenty-eight cents?"

"Yes."

"Do you have to—have gloves, Mandy?"

"Certainly. All the girls have agreed to wear gloves. You don't want the money for anything, do you, Faith? If you do, I won't take it."

"Why, no. I saved it for you."

"I hope I shall be able to get me a white satin belt ribbon, too," continued Amanda. "Maybe you can save enough for that by next June. Do you think you can? You don't need to use butter for cooking. Miss Fanning uses lard."

"Yes, I know I can save enough. How much will it cost?" asked the venturesome Faith.

"About seventy-five cents. You'd better begin now, Faith, for you know you can't save a cent in the winter."

"I know it. We ran behind last winter after the heifer went dry. We had to do without butter some of the time, an' when the hens stopped laying, I tell you we were pretty slim some days." Amanda laid her arm loosely about her sister's shoulders.

"You're a dear girl, Faith. You save up enough money to get me the belt ribbon, and some lace for my neck and sleeves, and when I get to teaching, I'll get you a white China silk just like mine." Faith smiled and looked happy.

"Wasn't it good of dear old Uncle Dick to get you such a beautiful dress. Just think, Mandy. White silk." Faith gave her head a little jerk and her blue eyes sparkled.

"Yes, it was good of him, but it would have been better if he had given me enough to make a decent dress."

"Why, isn't there enough?"

"There's not enough for an overskirt, I'm afraid, and I'm dying to have one. All the girls are having them. But maybe there'll be enough; I hope so."

"Won't it look nice without one?"

"It won't be fashionable."

"But, oh! it will look beautiful, Mandy; it can't help it. Think of white silk. Oh, I wish I could be with you when you graduate, and see you standing up there to read your essay, all dressed in white silk and ribbons. If I could only look at you through some little crack and have nobody see me."

"I shouldn't like you to do that, Faith, some one would be sure to see you; then I should die with shame. I wish you had a pretty new dress, dear, even a colored one, and then you could come right in and sit through it all."

"Oh, I wish I had." And Faith clasped her fingers tightly together in sympathy with the intensity of the wish, then they fell apart and lay limp in her lap.

"But I can't, and there's no use in even thinking about it."

"If you only hadn't taken the lace off your blue gingham to trim handkerchiefs, you might wear that with a new belt ribbon an' some new ribbons for your hair."

Faith looked up with interest.

"Don't you think it would do as it is with new ribbons? I could sit away back, you know."

"No, Faith. Without the lace it looks just like a common every-day dress. My classmates would be sure to find out you were there, and ask to be introduced, and I—"

"But I wouldn't come near you nor speak to you, and when you got up to read, I wouldn't act a mite interested; I'd look out of the window as if—"

"It wouldn't do, Faith. The Curtices will all be there; Ben knows you, and would be sure to point you out to his folks as my sister, and most likely he would wish to introduce you. You couldn't refuse to be introduced; it would be an insult to do so, and I should be ashamed—not of you, but of your dress. It would look even worse there among all the pretty fresh new dresses than it does here at home."

Faith buried her face in her sister's lap and gave way to violent sobs, then she sprang up suddenly with a laugh that was like a burst of sunshine in the midst of an April storm.

"I know what I can do, Mandy. I can put on Wallie's best clothes and go as a boy. Nobody'd know me then; I don't believe you'd know me, yourself."

"Faith Tolliver! Are you losing your senses? What would you do with your hair?"

"Tuck it under my cap."

"But you couldn't sit with your cap on. You would be expected to take it off as you entered the room. You'd have to cut your hair off."

"Well, I'd be willing to cut it off."

"That would be wicked, Faith; your hair is so long and beautiful. It would take years to grow as long again."

"I don't care; I'll do it, if you'll let me. Nobody ever sees me, anyway. Will you let me, Mandy? Say, will you?"

Amanda was silent for a few moments during which time Faith studied every line of her face.

"If the exercises were to be in the evening and out of doors, Faith, you might manage to avoid detection, for you do look well in Wallie's clothes; but they are to be in broad daylight and in the schoolhouse; some one would be sure to know you. Besides, I should be so nervous that I believe it would make me sick. I shouldn't be able to read in a natural voice, and I doubt if I could stand on my legs if I knew you were there in—Oh dear! there comes Aunt Hannah. Let's hide so she won't see us, and then maybe she won't come in." Faith turned her head and looked down the road.

"Oh, no, Mandy, don't let's. She's so good to us. You know she just about half keeps Miss Fanning in butter and eggs so you won't

have to work much for your board and have more time to get your lessons. Don't you think that's very kind?"

Amanda dropped back into her seat with a sigh.

"Yes, I know it is, Faith. I suppose I'm ungrateful, but you know how tiresome she is. I can't bear to hear her grunt about her leg. She's always just ready to die."

"Oh, I don't mind it a bit; I've got used to it; I like to hear her talk. Be good to her Mandy," pleaded Faith, in a low tone, as she rose to open the gate. "Why, certainly," replied the elder sister in a whisper, as she rose to greet her aunt.

"How do you do, Aunt Hannah?" said Faith, with a broad smile, as she threw the gate wide open. "You look tired out. You went all the way to Hazen, didn't ye? Come right in and sit down in the shade."

"Wa'al, I jes' be purt' nigh tuckered out, I kin tell ye; an' this left leg o' mine, is jest about killin' of me," replied the old lady as she moved along towards the settee at a hobble-and-hop gait.

"Wouldn't you prefer to go into the house and sit in the rocking-chair?" asked Amanda, trying her best to look pleased.

"No, Mandy, I prefer to set here. I don't b'lieve I could git to the house with my left leg to save the hull country."

"Well, I'm sure no reasonable person would expect you to go without it, aunt, so we will try to content ourselves here. I hope you didn't have to hobble like this when you were in Hazen," remarked Amanda, with an incredulous look and a side glance at her sister, as she arranged a cushion for herself.

"Lan' sakes, no! The spell didn't come on till I'd got started hum, an' it's been gettin' wuss every step of the way." Amanda tossed a folded shawl into her aunt's lap.

"Put this to your back, aunt. That old settee is too hollow to suit me."

"Thank ye, Mandy. This is more comf'table. I begin to think't my back's goin' to gin out, too, bimeby. Declare I do."

"Well, really! I hope not, Aunt Hannah. I don't see how you could get along without your back," and Amanda smiled cynically as she glanced at Faith with half closed eyes.

"Wa'al, I hope 'tain't nothin' ser'us, but lately, 'long about four o'clock in the afternoon, (Amanda leaned her back against a tree and closed her eyes) there's a numb feelin' creeps up and down my spine, followed by a prickly

sensashin, an' I didn't know but it might be that new disease that Mary Ann Towsley died with. The doctors is all in twitter 'bout it. They dunno what to make on it. Her sickness begun by jes' such a numbness and pricklin's I've got, an' I'm sure I dunno how soon—Why, lan' sakes alive! What in this world did I do with that passel." Hannah sprang up briskly enough, shook out her skirts, and started for the gate without a limp.

"I do wonder if I've gone an' lost that passel out o' the kirrige."

"Why, you put a parcel on the seat when you got out. Was that the one?" asked Faith, starting toward the gate.

"Why, yes, there 'tis now. What a scare that did give me! I thought jest as like as not I'd gone an' lost it on the way hum. Oh dear, oh dear! I shouldn't wonder if this excitement'd start up the misery in my stummick. Bring the passel here, Faithful, it's for you, anyway."

"For me?"

"Yes. I see Richard in the city and he tole me he'd bought a dress for Mandy to gradiate in, an' I went and got you one jes' like it. I think sisters had ort to be dressed alike."

"Oh, Aunt Hannah!" exclaimed Faith,

throwing her arms around the old lady's neck. "What made you? How did you come to think of it? How did you know I was nearly dying to go? Oh, Aunt Hannah! Dear Aunt Hannah! I was never so happy in all my life, that's the truth."

"Why, Faithful Tolliver! Leggo my neck. You're a shuv'in' my bunnit clean off'm my head, and you're towslin' my hair every which way."

Faith straightened up, and the sight of her aunt's bonnet hanging on one ear, threw her into a fit of hysterical laughter.

Amanda rose, straightened the bonnet and retied the strings.

"You are very good, Aunt Hannah, and I thank you with Faith. I'm sure she will never forget your kindness."

"Why, I calc'lated all the while to git her a dress to wear to the gradiatin'; o' course I did, an' o' course I'd a got you one if Dick hadn't. Dear me suz, how tired I be!"

"Open the passel, Faithful, and see how you like your dress."

Faith opened the parcel with flaming cheeks and shaking fingers.

"Just exactly like mine," exclaimed Amanda, caressing the roll of silk as one would a kitten.

"It's off'm the same piece. It's Chiny silk, an' they say it'll wash an' dew up jes' like a hank-chiff. Well, I mus' go on hum. If I stay out after sundown, I'm sure to git a misery somewheres er other, an' then I don't git no sleep the hull, endurin' night. If you'll open the gate, Faithful, I'll see if I can manage to git to the kirrige."

Faith opened the gate, and with the help of both girls, the old lady did manage to get to the "carriage," climb into it and drive way.

The following winter was the longest, loneliest winter Faith had ever known. The weather had been very dry, with but few of the usual cheery, white storms to break the monotony of the dull cold grey. Only a few of the oldest inhabitants could remember ever having seen such a sombre, monotonous stretch of cold weather.

"Daddy, Aunt Hannah thinks we're going to have a terrible drouth followed by a famine, and she says she wouldn't be a mite surprised if in another year there would be nothing to be seen in this whole valley but dry bones." The old man gave way to a hearty laugh that brought Wallie in from the back yard.

"Don't count too much on what yer Aunt Hannah perdicts, Faithful. Ye know everything looks black in her eyes. She'd take delight in a famine, Hannah would. What be you worryin' 'bout a drouth for, Faithful? You shell hev enough t'eat as long as Daddy lives."

"I'm not really worrying. Come, supper's ready, Daddy. But I was thinking about the garden. It wouldn't do to plant 'things yet, would it? It's too—too—"

"Why, law no, child. The frost ain't out o' the ground yet."

"I'm afraid Mandy can't wait then—My, oh! but that teapot handle's hot—She can't wait for the peas to grow. You know I sold three dollars worth last year. But her shoes are about worn out now." There was silence. Alexander was gazing out over the garden.

"You haven't the money to spare to get her a pair now, have you, Daddy?"

"A pair of what?"

"Shoes. Her's are worn out; they're not fit to be seen."

"You'll hev to take enough out o' that money in the clock, if she has to hev 'em. I'm jest about strapped fer money."

"I don't want to do that, Daddy. You'll

never in the world get your new leg if we keep taking money out for every little thing. Mandy won't take it. This old leg hurts you, I know it does."

"Oh, no, Faithful. I don't reely hurt me."

"But it's not comfortable," persisted Faith.

"No, it ain't very comf'table, but I c'n git along with it a spell yet better'n Mandy c'n go barefoot. I hate the squeak in this old thing the wust of anything," declared the old man, as he picked up his hat and went out, the old leg sending forth an unmusical little squeak at each step.

It was the middle of June.

Faith sat under the tree by the gate with her back to the roses. She was engaged in sewing lace around the edge of a handkerchief. It was for Amanda's birthday. Now and then she raised her head and looked down the road. There was a wistful look in her eyes, and a little droop at the corners of her mouth, but, if she felt any anxiety, it was as yet so little that she was not aware of it. Suddenly a deep flush swept over her face, but she did not move. A tall young man with a dark pleasant face stood still at the gate watching her.

"I wonder what she's thinking of," he mentally queried. "Too bad to break in upon her thoughts."

"Oh, I know you are there, Caleb Garland. I saw you. You might as well come in."

"Saw me," repeated the young man incredulously, as he lightly vaulted over the gate and walked towards her. "I don't see how you could: you didn't turn your head." Faith laughed merrily and her eyes danced with mischief.

"Why, I looked at you through my hair, out of a corner of my eye; this way:" and she acted the part to show him the way she had done it. Caleb, with eyes full of admiration looked down at her, smiling.

"Encore! Encore!" he cried, laughing. "Oh, do it again, Faith, please do it again. It's the best I ever saw."

Faith's cheeks turned almost as red as the roses that hung over her shoulders.

"I sha'n't do any such thing. You're making fun o' me. I can tell when folks make fun of me," and she immediately became intensely interested in her sewing. Her curved lips were drawn into a straight line, but she had hard work to keep the ends of the line from turning upwards. Caleb threw himself down upon the

grass in front of her, ran his fingers through his hair, then raising his eyes to her face, resumed his study of mock dignity.

"You can, can you?"

She made no reply, but there was a slight dilation of the nostrils and her lips tightened a little.

"Your intuition is remarkable, Faith. You are a born actress."

The ends of the straight line got a good start upwards, but were brought back with a jerk.

"Are you going to the commencement exercises, Faith?" Offended dignity took instant flight, and Faith's eyes sparkled with animation.

"Yes, I'm going. Are you?"

"Yes, if nothing happens to prevent."

"I meant that, too. If nothing happens to prevent. I hope it won't rain. If it should rain, I believe I sh'd die with disappointment. Oh, no, I shouldn't" she hastily added, "but I believe it'd break my heart. I've been looking forward to it for four years, you know. Do you believe that hearts ever really break, Caleb?"

"Yes, I can think of something that I believe would break my heart."

"But not about this?"

"No, not about this."

"You'd go right on living, though, wouldn't you. Aunt Hannah does and her heart's been broken seven times."

"Yes, I suppose I should, but I shouldn't want to. I would much rather die."

"I hope you'll never be so disappointed as all that," said Faith, with a glance of sympathy into the upturned face.

"Would you pity me, Faith, if I were? would you be sorry for me?"

"Why, of course, but that wouldn't help you any." Faith scowled a little, as she examined the point of her needle.

"It would if you pitied me hard enough to—to—"

"Oh! oh dear, how that hurts!" Faith grasped her left thumb and looked at the nail, her face drawn with pain.

"Why, what did you do? Stick your finger?"

"No. I ran the needle away under my thumb nail. Oh! how it hurts!"

"Pound it for about half a minute as hard as you can stand, with the scissors or something—here, my knife handle will do, and it'll take out every bit of soreness. I've seen mother do it hundreds of times. Here. Put your thumb down on the seat, nail upwards, and I'll pound it for you."

"No, thank you; I prefer to pound it myself. You couldn't tell how much I could stand, could you?"

"I could tell nearly."

"I can tell exactly." The young man watched her face as she pounded away at the injured thumb.

"Let me see," said he musingly. "Today is—is Wednesday. Is'n't it, Faith?"

Faith's lips tightened a little, but she was not aware of it. She pounded her thumb so hard that blood rushed to her cheeks.

"And tomorrow is—Thursday," pursued the young man, unaware that he was voicing his calculation."

"Yes," interrupted Faith, handing him the knife. "Tomorrow is Thursday, and the next day is Friday. Thursday always comes after Wednesday."

"Is—is—"

"No, she isn't coming this week. She is next, though."

"How did you know what I was going to ask? Are you a mind-reader?"

"Because you always ask that question."

"Do I?"

"Yes."

"Always?"

"Yes, always."

"Strange, isn't it?"

"No, I don't think that it is. I talk about the things I think about, and I suppose other folks do."

"Other folks don't," was the quick retort, "they talk of everything else first; at least some folks do."

"Daddy has come. I must go in now and get supper." Faith folded her work with nervous haste. She did not know why, but a vague feeling of alarm possessed her.

"That means," said the young man, striking a crease in the crown of his soft hat, "Caleb Garland, will you be good enough to go home?" Faith laughed constrainedly.

Caleb had risen and was looking down at her.

"How pretty those red roses look behind you, Faith," He meant, "how pretty you look with those red roses behind you," but he hadn't the courage to say it.

Caleb Garland was studying for the ministry under the tutelage of his uncle, the Rev. Elisha Garland, whose home was in Hazen. Caleb lived with his parents on a small but valuable fruit farm, situated on a bend of the Wellwood river, three quarters of a mile from the Tollivers, where they had recently taken up their

residence. Two days of each week, Monday and Wednesday, Caleb spent in study and recitation with his uncle in Hazen. On his way home, he was wont to loiter at the Tolliver gate, under the big tree where he loved to spend the hour between four and five in rest and conversation with Faith.

That Caleb was in love with Amanda, Faith had no doubt. That Amanda was in love with Benjamin Curtice, she felt certain, and to her dismay it had suddenly dawned upon her that her own heart was fast getting beyond her control. Her cheeks burned with shame at the thought, and she bravely resolved to crush her love at any cost to herself. So she at once began a process of self torture, than which no better fertilizer for love is known, and the next time Caleb Garland called at the Tolliver gate, Faith was not to be seen. He took a seat under the tree and waited; looking now and then towards the house. Faith was busying herself about the kitchen. She saw him come in at the gate and seat himself under the tree, but she would not allow herself the pleasure of a second view of him. Something suggested to her that she could easily look at him through the vines that covered the kitchen window, without being seen, but she refused herself even this meagre

pleasure. When at last she heard the gate creak and swing shut, she sprang to the window. He was just turning away and she saw that there was disappointment in his face.

"I suppose," thought Faith, as she turned sadly from the window, "That he enjoys talking with me because I'm Mandy's sister. I understand some things now better than I did. I know now why I kept that piece of paper that he wrote my name on and the button off his vest, and why I have taken to studying Mandy's old books. Oh, yes, I know all about it now. I was just going to be in love with him, and I'm glad I found it out in—in time." There was a protesting throb of pain in her heart, but with her head held high and her lips compressed she began a search for hard work; it was not yet time to get supper. She put on the kettle and began mixing dyes to color the stocking yarn. She usually had the winter stockings well under way before June, but this year she had been dilatory; she had preferred sitting under the trees sewing lace on handkerchiefs to knitting coarse socks.

When the liquid in the kettle was ready for use, instead of using a stick to stir the yarn as had always been their custom, she plunged her hands into the dye, taking pains to color her

wrists and arms as much as possible. She took a morbid pleasure in it. She was thinking at the time how white and delicate Amanda's hands had grown, and also, that she would show Caleb she didn't care how her own hands looked, and she hoped that it would also serve to convince him, in case he had any doubt about it, that she cared nothing for him or for his opinion. There was nothing for her to do, anyway, but to stay at home and take care of Wallie as long as she lived. Even if Caleb loved her instead of her sister, she could never marry him; so it was best as it was, and she plunged her fair arms still deeper into the purple dye.

The following afternoon, while on his way to the Corners, Caleb halted at the Tolliver gate. He could see a yellow head moving about over the tops of the bushes. Faith thought she looked very ugly with her curls twisted into a knot and stuck through with a knitting-needle, but she had never made a greater mistake. Knowing that it was his time for study, she was not looking for a call from her young man friend at this hour.

She was hanging the dyed yarn on the garden fence to dry when he walked up to the gate, and she was just stooping to take another skein

from the basket when he stepped through the bushes and stood beside her. Faith, a little startled, straightened up, and a rich color swept over her face.

"Why, Caleb Garland! How did you get in without squeaking the gate?" she demanded.

"I jumped over it. Didn't you see me coming?"

"No. How did you—why, I thought—don't you have to get your lessons?" she stammered out, shaking a skein of the wet yarn into a tangle in a vain endeavor to hide her nervousness.

"Yes, but I'm going to the Corners on an errand. I—saw you out here—and—I thought I'd stop—a minute, just to speak to you—and—"

"Well, you see I'm very busy," she interrupted, and shaking out another skein of yarn she turned her back to him and spread it on the fence. "I shall be busy all day, too," she continued, "because Mandy's coming home tomorrow; she changed her mind." Faith, turning, glanced into Caleb's face to note the expected glow of pleasure, but there was no sign of pleasure in his face; his lips paled slightly and a pained look came into the dark, expressive eyes but he drew himself up proudly.

"I'm sorry I troubled you, Faith. I beg your pardon. I can take a hint, and I—shall also—take my leave." He stood a moment with his hat in his hand as if waiting for her to speak. Faith wished to say something; to offer an apology for her rudeness, but instead of doing so, she shook out another skein of yarn and hung it on the fence. She wondered why she did it. She made up her mind, as she patted and spread out the yarn, that she would ask his pardon, but when she turned to do so, he had gone. She leaned her forehead against a tree and sobbed aloud, in an abandonment of grief.

"Oh, how my heart aches!" she moaned. "It seems as if it would kill me, and I almost wish it would." Her hands suddenly dropped from her face over which crept an expression of perplexity and wonder.

"Yes, that's it; I understand it now; my heart is breaking. That's why it pains me so. My heart is breaking. Oh, how it hurts! If Caleb feels like this about Mandy, I do pity him. I wish I hadn't been cross to him."

It was Friday afternoon. Amanda had just come home, and was seated at the kitchen window.

"How nice and clean everything looks, Faith, and you've got all the yarn dyed, too, hav'n't

you? But, Faith, for mercy's sake, don't ever again put your hands into the dye; there's no need of it. It makes you look a fright."

"Oh, I don't care; nobody ever sees me."

"Why, yes they do, too. Aunt Hannah said that Caleb Garland came often to see you, and I tell you, Faith Tolliver, there are few girls who wouldn't be glad to see him coming any day. He's handsome, well educated, has good connections, good habits, and is well off. What more could a girl ask?"

"It's no such thing; he don't come to see me!" replied Faith, with a flush of indignation. "He just stops to rest a few minutes at the gate. He's never been in the house once."

"Of course he wouldn't go into the house when you're alone. It wouldn't be proper. Certainly he comes to see you. There's no one else here."

"I tell you he does not," cried Faith, snappishly. "He comes to rest and ask about you. He always asks when you're coming home, and—and lots of things about you."

"Does he?" asked Amanda, flushing with pleasure, and, turning her head, she glanced at herself in the glass.

Amanda and Faith walked out under the tree by the gate.

"What time did you say he usually passes Faith? or, rather, doesn't pass."

"About four o'clock, but this is Friday; he doesn't go to Hazen on Fridays. I presume he'll call though, because I told him you were coming home."

"I do hope, Faith, that you can get that color off before the graduating exercises, it looks, oh, it looks—"

"Oh, yes, long before. It's two weeks yet."

"I don't see what in the world possessed you to put your hands into the dye, anyway; there was no necessity for it."

"Oh, I felt kind of—desprit that day; I didn't care."

"Desperate? You, desperate! Faith Tolliver! What in the world made you desperate? I didn't suppose anything could make you—"

"There, I told you, didn't I? interrupted Faith, glad to divert attention from herself.

"Told me what?"

"That Caleb would come. There he is coming towards the gate. Now be decent to him, Mandy."

"'Be decent to him!' What an insinuation! Of course I shall. Did you ever know me to be otherwise? How do you do, Caleb. Aren't you coming in?" asked Amanda with one of her sweetest smiles. Amanda's smile

was the admiration and envy of her friends and foes.

"Well, I don't know," replied the young man, halting outside the gate, then, as if limited for time, he looked at his watch, and gave a quick glance at Faith, saying:

"You look very comfortable there in the shade."

Faith felt that she ought to add a word as their last parting had been rather strained, but she was afraid of saying too much.

"We are comfortable," she ventured at last, "but don't you think we look rather lonesome?"

With a grateful smile for reply, he opened the gate and stepped through.

"Don't disturb yourselves, girls, this is my favorite place isn't it, Faith?" and Caleb threw himself upon the grass and leaned his head against a tree. Faith flushed and looked down at her purple hands that lay idle in her lap. She felt an impulse to cover them with her apron, but she immediately decided that to do so would look as if she cared.

While these thoughts were passing in her mind, Amanda and Caleb became engaged in conversation. Amanda had just expressed herself as being shocked to hear that one of her schoolmates was going to be married soon after graduating.

"I don't see why you are shocked because a girl is going to get married after she graduates," observed Caleb, with a languid air. "All girls get married, don't they? Minnie Severs is also going to be married after she graduates. It seems to be the fashion."

"Yes, it does," replied Amanda, "but Minnie is old enough to get married; she's about my age; but Mabel is a child; she's just the age of Faith. Fancy Faith getting married!" Both turned their eyes upon Faith, who sat a little apart with her back to the rose bush. She raised her eyes for a moment and looked from the one to the other in silence.

"Faith shall not think of marrying for five years yet, if I have anything to say about it," continued Amanda.

"You're wasting your time in discussing me," declared Faith, with more warmth than she wished to show, "for I'm never going to be married."

"What, never?" asked her sister, elevating her eyebrows.

"No, never! Never as long as I live." Caleb gave her a penetrating look and her glance fell.

"Don't talk so foolishly, Faith. Of course you'll marry when you're old enough," urged Amanda.

"I tell you I never will. It's the fashion for girls to graduate and then marry," retorted Faith, hotly. "You just said so. My mind is made up about marrying, and I shan't change it to please you or anyone else. It isn't likely that I shall ever get a chance, but I shall not marry if I do." Caleb saw, as she glanced up with a flash of her eyes, that they were glassy with tears, and that her lips were tremulous. He adroitly turned the conversation, the while wondering what could be the cause of the sudden change in her manner, and if by word or look she had discovered his secret and wished to forwarn him.

"Speaking of marriage," observed Caleb, "reminds me. Prof. Gordon is engaged to Cora Brainard. He is the manager of the 'Argus,' you know."

"That old man!" ejaculated Amanda, with a toss of her young head.

"I suppose they would like to be alone," thought Faith, as she rose from her seat and started towards the house. Amanda's eyes, with a dreamy expression, followed her sister as she walked away.

"Faith is a dear girl. I can't imagine what made her so cross just now. Doesn't her hair look pretty in the sun?"

"She doesn't mean all she says, does she?" There was appeal in the young man's eyes as he raised them to Amanda's face.

"Yes, I think she means it. Faith never says what she doesn't mean. I hope she'll change her mind, though."

"Do you think she will? That is—is she inclined to change her mind?"

"No. If she has ever changed her mind about anything, I can't remember it. I know she would, however, if she were convinced that she was in the wrong, for she's not unreasonable nor stubborn, only firm when she believes she's right."

"Has her resolution to remain single anything to do with—your brother?"

"Yes, it has all to do with it. She thinks she ought to devote her life to the care of Wallie, and that she couldn't do it if she married. She fancies that mother wishes her to, and neither father or I can argue her out of it. Faith adores Wallie. She'll stop anything to amuse him."

"And he? Does he appreciate it?"

"No, indeed. He doesn't appreciate anything. There she comes."

Faith had come out of the house and stood in the sun shading her eyes with her hand.

"Supper is almost ready, Mandy. Won't you come in and have some with us, Caleb?" She was smiling, and the sun brought out the rich gold in her yellow brown hair. Amanda smiled into the young man's admiring eyes.

"She's pretty, isn't she, Caleb?"

"She's more than that, a hundred times more. She's beautiful, and growing more so every day."

"Yes, and good, too," declared Amanda.

"Yes, and good, too," he repeated. Faith turned suddenly without another word and walked back into the house. She walked more proudly than usual—the yellow head was held higher, because she was hurt.

"He's so taken up with Mandy he couldn't even see me; didn't answer me when I invited him to have supper with us," she thought, as, with a choking sensation in her throat, she drew the tea and sliced the bread.

"Wallie eats at the table now, does he, Faith?" Amanda had come in and seated herself in the rocking-chair close to the vine-covered window.

"Yes, he does. Who told you?"

"Why, you did. You wrote me about it. Don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes, so I did."

"How does he behave?"

"Just like anybody else. He doesn't talk much, though."

"Good thing, I should say. I never could bear to hear him talk. Does he eat with his fingers?"

"No, he eats just like anybody else; he has eaten at the table ever since the time he ate dinner with the Courtland boys. Poor boy, he's working so hard today helping Mr. Nathan put up a lightning rod, but I don't suppose he knows what it's for."

"I'm not so sure about that, Faith. He knows more than he appears to; he's very keen about some things."

"Yes, I know he is. And did you ever notice, Mandy, that he knows some things he never learned—that he never could have learned from any of us? For none of us knew enough to teach him."

"Yes, I've noticed it. It's unaccountable. I never could make it out."

"I can. It's plain enough to me," said Faith as she poured the hot water into the teapot.

"Well! Would you be good enough to enlighten me, Madam Minerva, to give me one little measure from your storehouse of wisdom?" Amanda's cheeks dimpled.

"God knows," replied the younger sister, seriously, "that Wallie can't reason things out as we do, so out of pity for him, he gives him a few things 'out of hand,' as it were—already reasoned out."

"What a strange idea, Faith. Do you suppose the Almighty would pay so much attention as all that to a fool?"

"Why, certainly. Don't the bible say that not even a little sparrow can fall to the ground without His notice? Daddy says he was brighter than any of us before he got hurt. And you oughtn't to call him a fool, Mandy. I don't see how anybody can look at Wallie's big, beautiful eyes and call him a fool."

"Oh, I didn't mean any harm, Faith, only, you know, everybody calls him our 'fool;' behind our backs, of course."

"Everybody doesn't," asserted Faith, with an indignant flash of her eyes. "Only heartless people or people who never take time to think."

"I should like to know what has come over you, Faith; you're so ill-tempered. So I'm either heartless, or never think. Which is it, little sister?" Faith made no reply.

"Oh, never mind," admonished Amanda, mockingly, "you needn't answer me; it isn't worth while. To settle it, we'll say that I am

both heartless and unthinking. Now, we'll talk about something else. I'm heartbroken about my dress, Faith. It makes me faint to think of it."

"Why, what's the matter? Did Miss Fanning spoil it in the making?"

"No, it's all right what there is of it, but it is just as I feared; there was not enough for an overskirt. All the girls are having them; they're the latest thing, and my dress is just a plain straight skirt, the same as they wore last year. I could cry about it. Every one of the girls but Mary Powers and me are having overskirts. I declare, I'd rather have a common white muslin dress with an overskirt than a white silk without one. I don't see why Uncle Dick didn't get a little more while he was about it; he might at least have asked me how much I wanted. There's no need of his being so stingy, as much money as he has."

"Why, Mandy Tolliver! After his giving you that beautiful dress. You ought to be ashamed."

"Well, there isn't enough. Why didn't he ask how much it would take?"

"I don't suppose Uncle Dick thought anything about an overskirt, mebbe he never saw one. What are they like?"

"Come on up stairs and I'll show you. I brought my dress home so you could see it."

"After supper, Mandy; father's coming in now, and there comes Wallie, just as warm and tired as he can be, poor boy."

"He's washing himself, Faith," whispered Amanda, peeping through the vines. "How have you taught him that?"

"I never taught him; I couldn't; I tried hard enough; but he has washed himself before every meal, whether he needed it or not, ever since he worked at Mr. Garland's and saw the men wash. I think that shows how much better example is than anything we can say. He has never played pig since that day."

"Hush, Faith. If he should hear you it might make him think of it."

"Now," said the younger sister, after supper was over and she had seated herself on the edge of Amanda's bed, "tell me what an overskirt is like. I never saw one. I'm curious, and if it wouldn't take too much, mebbe I have enough silk left to make you one."

"Oh, Faith, dear! How much have you?"

"A little over two yards." Amanda turned away with a sigh of disappointment.

"That would be just about half enough, Faith. I'll show you what they are like. Give me your skirt."

Amanda put her sister's silk skirt on over her own, and looped it up here and there with the bows of pink ribbon that Hannah Weaver had given Faith to wear with her new dress. Faith clapped her hands with delight.

"Oh, Mandy, it's beautiful, beautiful! It makes you look just like a picture; and it's the overskirt that does it. Oh, Mandy, if we could only have overskirts! How much will it take for two? I've got about two yards and an eighth."

"It would take four yards for each overskirt. There's no use in talking about it; it's a waste of time." And Amanda, throwing the skirts over a chair, gave way to tears; an unusual thing for her.

Faith was deeply moved. Tears often filled her own eyes, but to see her sister weep was another thing. She sat up straight, and with tearless eyes looked at the limp little skirts hanging over the chair-back, then at her sobbing sister. She was weighing the hopes she had cherished for four years against the tears of Amanda. An expression settled on her face that seemed to rob it of some of its natural sweetness; to have a straightening effect in the curves of her lips. She gave her weeping sister a little push.

"Come, Mandy, get up; you'll make your

headache. I know what we can do; I've got it all fixed. Come, get up; you're frownsing your hair; I tell you I've got it all planned." Faith's voice had in it no note of sympathy, only the cold tone of decision and determination. Amanda rose and seated herself in the little rocking-chair, her face a picture of distress.

"Well, how have you g—g—got it fixed, I should like to know? How are we going to b—b—buy six yards of silk and get two overskirts made out o' nothing?"

"We're not going to buy any silk nor get any overskirts made. You're going to wear my skirt for an overskirt, just as it's fixed now, with the ribbons an' all, and I'm not going."

"Well, you are going," asserted Mandy, straightening up.

"No, I'm not. I've been thinking it over, and I've made up my mind that it would be better for one of us to go well dressed than for both of us to go poorly dressed."

"We shouldn't be poorly dressed, only out of fashion."

"Well, out of fashion, then. You've got to be there, and I haven't."

"But, Faith, you've been counting on it so long! I hate to disappoint you."

"Yes, I know I've been counting on it, but

why couldn't you dress up afterwards and read it here? You could stand up on the kitchen table, I could sit in the front room and look at you from away off, and I could imagine the house full of people."

Faith swung one foot and gazed at a burly knot in the floor. Already she had, in her imagination, a large and appreciative audience in the front room, and Amanda, in her white dress, standing on the kitchen table.

"Faith Tolliver! Do you mean it?"

"Why, certainly I do. What do you suppose I'm talking for? There is no use for you to say anything, for I've made up my mind." So it was settled, as things usually were when Faith announced that she "had made up her mind." After the sisters went to bed that night Faith covered her head with the bed clothes, and sweetened with her tears the bitterest disappointment that she had ever known.

It was early Monday morning. A fringe of golden light had just appeared in the east, as Amanda and Faith walked out to the road. The grass was wet with a heavy dew, and the sweet spirit of a new-born day pervaded the air.

"I do feel so mean about taking your skirt, Faith. I believe you'd go and wear it yourself if I just wouldn't take it."

"No. I've made up my mind, now, Mandy, and I sha'n't change it. You might just as well keep the skirt till you come home. I shall not want it, and you may need it again."

"Very well, Faith, I'll be careful with it. Now don't forget the roses."

"No, I won't. Good-by."

"Good-by. Oh, Faith! Don't make my aprons so stiff as you did the last time, and, say, Faith." Amanda walked back a few steps. "Do you remember the day we sat upon the hillside by the brook and I told you how I longed to go to school and graduate?"

"Yes, I remember it. I remember just how the clouds looked that day, and I remember the sound of the bells and the brook. I've never been a little girl since; that day was the last."

"Now, I'm going to have my wish, Faith," pursued Amanda, deaf to her sister's reminiscence. "I'm so glad and so happy."

"So'm I," said Faith, smiling. "I kind of wish I could graduate, too, Mandy."

"Do you, Faith? Well, maybe you can. Good-by till after."

"Yes, good-by till after."

"Don't forget to send the roses, Faith. Mary Powers is going to send a big bunch of pure white ones up to me, and I'm going to send

some red ones up to her. Don't tell anyone; we wouldn't have the others know it for the world 'n' all."

"No, I won't; you needn't be afraid."

The commencement day came at last with lagging feet; each hour of the preceding week having been called upon to render an account of its minutes.

"I guess I'll ride to Hazen on hoss back, Faithful, if you're goin' with yer aunt in the kirridge. I've got Nate Courtland to come over and stay with Wallie. He'll be as happy as a pig in high clover every minute o' the time. Give me the posies if you want me to take 'em."

Faith watched her father ride away, then she walked aimlessly about the two little rooms. She was not in her usually pacific frame of mind.

"Oh, dear!" she burst out at last, wringing her hands, "what shall I tell Aunt Hannah when she comes? She'd never forgive Mandy if she knew—she'd be sure to blame her, and Mandy isn't a mite to blame; I just made her take it; she couldn't help herself. I wish my head ached harder—it does ache a little, really. There—another pain shot through my temple. I b'lieve my head is honestly going to ache. Mebbe it's because I stayed awake nearly all night, think-

ing. Oh, goody, there comes Caleb—I most wish I had my skirt.”

“Why, what’s the matter, Faith? You don’t look—are you quite well?” Faith pushed a chair towards her visitor. “No, thank you, I prefer a door-step to a rocking-chair, anytime. Are you well this morning, Faith?”

“No, I’m not well. I’m not well at all. Do I look pale?” An amused look passed over the young man’s face.

“No, I can’t say that you look pale, your cheeks are more flushed than usual, in fact, but you look worried.”

“Don’t folks ever have headache when their cheeks are red?” Caleb smiled and then laughed outright.

“Yes, sometimes, if they are feverish,” he replied.

“If you laugh at me, Caleb Garland, I’ll never speak to you,” declared Faith, with a pout that was half smile.

“Well, I shouldn’t wonder if you had a spell of headache coming on—you look like it; but it may come too late to suit your purpose.”

“You’re just as unkind as you can be. I’ll never again as long as I live tell you—”

“You haven’t told me anything. Why don’t you trust me, Faith? Tell me all about it, and

let me help you. You don't wish to go to Hazen today, and you are trying to be ill. Eh? Now be honest."

"I can't go, Caleb. It's impossible."

"Does Mandy expect you?"

"No. She knows I can't come."

"Then what's the matter with simply staying at home?"

"Oh, it isn't Mandy I care about; it's Aunt Hannah; she's the trouble. She's the one I don't know how to manage. She's coming after me, and when she finds I can't go, she'll blame Mandy, and Mandy isn't to blame."

"What deep and terrible plot have you and Mandy been concocting against a defenseless old woman, and into which plot I am to be drawn as accessory before the fact? I hope there's no bloodshed in it, Faith; I hope you're not going to kill her pet cat or her canary bird. The sight of innocent blood always unnerves me. Don't sit with your head down like that, Faith. Look at me; I'm going now. Good-by."

Faith heard him rise and step down upon the gravel walk. She raised her eyes, but not her head, and smiled sweetly.

"Don't worry any more about your Aunt Hannah; she won't come after you." With this,

the young man walked to the gate, mounted his horse and rode away.

Gazing down the road, Faith saw the rider disappear in the grove; and long after he was out of sight her eyes clung to the vacancy under the arch of green trees that clasped hands over the roadway leading through the sparse wood. This natural gateway was called the "Green Arch."

"I suppose," thought she, rising to go into the house, "that it's because I'm Mandy's sister. It must be." Faith felt much relieved in the belief that her Aunt Hannah would be likely to drive directly to Hazen, and she felt even more relieved since she had convinced herself that she was really not very well; that she almost had a headache.

The day was a long, lonely one for Faith. Feeling disinclined to engage in any everyday work, she got the rag bag, tore a great pile of strips and began the braided rug she had for years been trying to find time to make. She sat on the kitchen porch with her basket and ball, sewing diligently all day. When Caleb rode up to the gate late in the afternoon and dismounted she was still at work.

"Hello, Faith. How's your headache?"

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come, Caleb. I was getting so dreadfully—dreadfully—"

"Lonesome?"

"No. Anxious to hear about Mandy." Caleb looked a little crestfallen. "How did she look? How was her essay? What did Aunt Hannah say? Sit down in this chair; I'll fix it so it won't rock. There, now, tell me all about it."

"Shall I hold your ball, Faith? See! It's trying to get away."

"If you like. Now, how did she—"

"She looked beautiful, and her essay was the best of the four." Faith gave a little scream of delight.

"She took the blue ribbon and no mistake," continued Caleb.

"What blue ribbon?" Faith's eyes dilated.

"Oh, it's only a saying when people, or rather horses and things come out—take first prize. She got the dictionary on her essay, and Miss Cutler got a copy of Mrs. Hemans, as second prize. Some one sent Mandy an immense bunch of white roses. It was handed her by one of the ushers just as she finished reading."

Enthusiasm died out of the listener's face, and she fixed her eyes upon the restive black horse at the gate. He pricked his ears forward now and then, and, standing like a statue,

gazed at the two on the kitchen porch, then round and round the post he swung, winding and unwinding his halter.

"She was very much surprised," continued Caleb, "for flowers are rarely given at the Hazen school. At first she thought it couldn't be meant for her, and she wasn't going to take it. She shook her head and spoke low to the usher. He turned up the card and showed her the name—hers, of course, then she took it, laid her blushing face against it, and smiled sweetly at the audience. How they cheered her! She did it all so gracefully. Oh, the boys in town are all losing their heads about her." A hot flush overspread Faith's face; her eyes were still fixed on the horse.

"How pretty and black Prince looks!" she observed. "How he shines! How red his nostrils look—inside! As if they were painted." Caleb turned his eyes toward the horse.

"Yes, he is sleek, just now." There was a moment's silence. The morning-glory vines rustled softly, and the paling sunlight slanted across the porch.

"I wish I could graduate, Caleb."

"Do you intend going to school, now that Mandy is through? I—your father said something about it once to mother."

"I shall try to, but I'm afraid Mandy will not be able to get along with Wallie—Mandy can't manage him very well; he doesn't care about her; he won't mind her at all. I'm going to learn from Mandy, if I can't go to school."

"She's coming home to live after school is out, is she?" Caleb spoke doubtfully.

"Why, certainly. Where else could she go? She may feel lonesome for awhile, but I'm going to make it as easy for her as I can so she'll like to stay. She can read as much as she likes."

"I don't see how anyone could feel lonesome here. I never do, for example." Caleb smiled mischievously, and Faith blushed.

"You're easily amused; Mandy isn't. Oh, dear, how this thread knots." So they talked on without saying much of anything, till Hannah Weaver drove up to the gate and Caleb rode off towards home. Hannah watched him as his horse sped away.

"Wa'al, I dew declare!" said she, gazing after him. "I don't see nothin' the matter with them feet. Mebbe 'twas a tack or somethin'. 'Pears to me it's got well quick."

"What, Aunt Hannah? What about his feet?"

"You poor child! You've jes' been sufferin'

terrible, hain't you? I druv straight hum from Hazen and got my yarbs. I'll straighten ye up in less'n no time. I'll give you a good dose of boneset—I've got sech a sight of it—an' some leptander. Then I'll put a bag o' hops on yer stummick, an' a mustard plaster on the back o' yer neck." The old lady threw off her cape and began picking at the knot in her bonnet strings.

"I won't be no time a-doing o' it," she continued, "an' by bed time you won't know 't you ever had a headache."

"But, Aunt Hannah, I really don't think I need it. Mustard plasters, you know, make me crazy."

"I know they be pretty bad when the mustard's fresh like this, but with all the pain you've got in your head, you won't skeersely notice the mustard."

"But, Aunt Hannah! D—don't make it. You see, I'm better. I don't need it. It'd be too bad to waste the mustard." In spite of expostulations, Hannah poured out the mustard and took down the vinegar bottle.

"I tell you, Aunt Hannah, I'm well. My head don't ache a bit."

"Not the least mite? Don't ye feel even the tracks of it?"

"No. I'm perfectly well. Put away the mustard."

"But you'd better drink a cupful o' this boneset tea, Faithful. It's too bad to waste it, an' it 'pears to me they's a kind of a yallerish look to yer eyes. I shouldn't wonder a mite if you was comin' down with the yaller janders. Headaches is often the forerunners of terrible diseases."

"Do my eyes look yellow? I hadn't noticed it."

"Yes, it 'pears to me they do, jest a little mite."

Seeing that there was no way out of it, Faith took the cup and drained it to the last drop.

"Now sit down and rest, Aunt Hannah. You must be tired."

"Well, I jes' be tired. I've worrited an' worrited the hull blessed day. I wouldn't 'a' gone a step to Hazen if it hadn't 'a' been for young Mr. Garland. He come over an' tole me you wa'n't a-goin' 'cause you'd got the headache, an' I was bound to come over here an' doctor ye up—I didn't care no great 'bout goin', nohow—but he stood out 't I mus' go; he said Mandy'd be dretfully disappointed if I didn't—guess he thinks a sight o' Mandy, he was so terrible sot on my goin'—an' he went out with

all his fine clothes on an' hitched Madge up to the kirridge for me. Even then I told him 't I didn't feel right goin' off and leavin' you to home sick, an' 't I b'lieved I wouldn't go after all. He seemed dretfully disapp'inted an' said 't he'd calc'lated to ride to town with me an' lead his hoss behind 'cause he was a leetle mite lame in one foot. The poor feller looked jes's if he didn't know what to dew, 'n' I went jes' so'st he c'd ride along with me. But I guess they wa'n't much the matter with his hoss' foot after all the way he cantered off jes' now. You've begun yer rug, hain't ye, Faithful?"

"Yes, I began it this morning. Don't you think I've worked pretty fast?"

"Yes, you must 'a' worked dretful fast to git all this done. You're goin' to put it right in front o' the door, hain't ye? It'll show from the road when the door's open, if you put it right in front o' the door."

"No. I don't want to cover up these knots. I'm going to put it in front of Daddy's bed."

"Don't want to cover up these knots, hey? Why laws a me, I sh'd think you'd want tew."

"No. You see they look like faces, Aunt Hannah. Mandy and I named them years and years ago, and they seem like old friends. This one is Hannibal. We called him Hannibal

because we never could scrub his face white—Hannibal was a black man—and we named that one Milton, because—don't you see, his eyes are closed, and Milton was a blind poet. He wrote beautiful poetry."

"Oh, yes. I've heerd about him," observed Hannah. "He wrote some poetry 'bout a paradise 't got lost, didn't he? That's what Mis' Blackmore's daughter Sary sets 'round an' reads on purt' nigh the hull time an' lets her ma do the work. I guess he wa'n't much, that Mr. Milton. 'Pears to me 't writin' portry's putty 'small business for a full grown man."

"But he was blind, Aunt Hannah."

"Wa'al, mebbe he wa'n't to blame, then. I don't want to jedge him. If I sh'd lose both eyes, mebbe I shouldn't do no better'n he done. But it 'pears to me he might 'a' learned to knit. Dear me suz! It's been dretful hot today, hain't it? I never see sech hot weather in all my born days. I shouldn't wonder a mite if it'd breed some new disease. I met Dr. Carley to-day an' I ast him if he'd heerd of any new ones. He laffed, an' said 't he guessed they'd hev to hunt some more new feathers for th' ole birds; that they hadn't nothin' new hatched out yet this summer. Laws a me! I mos' dropped that

sasser. I guess I'd better set it away an' not be playin' with it. I'll leave some o' my boneset, Faithful, an' if you should ever hey another sech a turn as you've had today, make a cup full of the tea real strong an' drink it right down."

It was Sunday. Faith, as usual, had accompanied Aunt Hannah to the afternoon services held in the schoolhouse at the Corners. Just as they were ready to start for home, Hannah happened to discover a crack in the rear axle-tree of her carriage. Two of the elders of the church decided, after a careful examination, that it was not a fresh break; that it had every appearance of having been cracked a good while. Faith asserted stoutly that it was there years and years ago: that she and her sister had used to stick chicken feathers into it and play they were Indians on the war-path. Hannah opined that if this were true, nothing but a miracle had preserved her life all these years, and she would neither get into the carriage herself nor allow Faith to do so.

"It'd be temptin' Providence to get inter that kirridge, knowin' what we do; an' if we sh'd get in an' start fer hum, I shouldn't even hope to git there alive." So Hannah drove the three

miles home walking beside the carriage, while Caleb, leading Prince by a long halter, followed loiteringly with Faith.

There had been a heavy rain early in the morning, and the road was hard-beaten and clean. Wild roses lifted their sweet faces here and there along the wayside; a bright-eyed squirrel rose on his haunches and, snuffing, peered cautiously at the small caravan, while his mate, in a spirit of daring, raced recklessly along the top rail of the stake-and-rider fence. At the sound of footsteps a mother bird skulked through the grass, and, with jealous fear, spread her warm breast lovingly over her precious eggs.

"By the way, Faith, there's to be a dance at Judge Curtice's Friday night; Allen is going away, you know, to finish his law course, and they're going to give him a grand ball as a send off. There are over two hundred invitations out. Mandy's going, I hear."

"Mandy going? You're going, too, I suppose."

"Yes, just to look on; I never dance."

"Mandy doesn't dance, either," observed Faith. "She doesn't know how."

"Oh, yes she does, pardon me, Mandy's a good dancer."

"Why, I didn't know she had ever danced in her life." Faith's eyes were wide open.

"She learned last winter of Prof. Kavanaugh, who boarded at Miss Fanning's. Miss Foster played the piano for them, and they practiced every evening except Wednesdays and Fridays. Oh, yes," continued the speaker, after a moment's pause, "Mandy, as a society girl, is quite up-to-date."

"Oh, how I should like to see her dance."

"That's just what I was going to suggest. I have an invitation, and I shall feel honored if you will go with me."

"But I have no invitation."

"Haven't I just invited you?"

"Yes, but—but you are only invited yourself."

"I am invited to come and bring a lady; any lady I choose, who will be good enough to accept me as an escort." He opened the invitation and handed it to her.

"'Yourself and lady,'" read Faith. "Yes, I see. The one who gives the invitation leaves the lady question for the one invited to decide."

"Exactly."

"Are you sure Mandy's going?"

"No, but Ben told me he had invited her, and that she had accepted the invitation."

"Did he invite her just the same as he invited you?"

"No. He invited her just the same as I invite you. If she goes she will go with him."

"Oh!"

Caleb watched her in silence, noting the rapid change of expression, as, carried away by her imagination, she whirls light as down amidst a throng of fairy dancers, her fair, young face warming like a rare flower just opening to the wooing of the sun.

"Should you like to go, Faith?" Faith started, blushing deeply.

"I should like to go, Caleb, but it would be impossible. I mustn't dream of such things. School should come before parties. I should feel out of place at a ball."

Faith stepped inside the gate and watched Caleb as he rode away. Prince's steel shoes threw back flashes of sunlight as his nimble feet beat a rolling tattoo on the hard road.

The following day a letter came from Mandy, telling of the ball, and all about her essay, omitting none of the compliments she had received, on both her dress and her composition. A look of pain settled on Faith's face as she read the last page of the hurriedly written letter:

"I suppose I must come home after the ball,

but oh, dear, Faith, I would almost as soon die. I look forward to it with a shudder. Everything is so still at home, nothing but the mooing of cattle, the barking of dogs, the cackle of hens, and the continual tinkle of bells. I want to be with you, Faith, but how I can endure the old humdrum life of drudgery, I don't know. I almost wish sometimes that I had never left it, but had allowed myself to grow old, like moss on a log that has no thought or wish for anything but decayed wood. I cry myself to sleep almost every night, as the time draws near for my living entombment. Prof. Bemis, dear old man, is going to try to get me a school next year, but he says it is impossible to get one this year.

"In haste, your loving sister, Mandy."

The castles Faith had for four years been building, with her sister in the home life as foundation for them all, tottered and fell. She poured the tea in silence that evening, then walked over to the window.

"Don't Daddy's little girl want any supper? Pour yourself some tea 'fore it gits cold, Faithful." Faith poured out the tea and made a heroic attempt to stifle, with chunks of bread, the sobs that bubbled up in her throat.

"I shouldn't s'pose you'd git lonesome now,

Faithful, when Mandy's comin' home so soon. Here, take some apple sass an' put on yer bread. You're eatin' of it dry."

It was nine o'clock on a bright moonlight night. Faith rose from the kitchen lounge, tiptoed into the front room and up to her father's bed. He was sleeping soundly. His wooden leg lay on the floor. She turned the kitchen lamp low, and went softly out of doors. Wallie was in the wood yard. She opened the gate and walked in. The boy started and raised the ax as her shadow crept upon the logs before him. She sprang backward with upthrown arms.

"Don't, Wallie. It's Faith. You wouldn't strike me. Did I scare you, dear?" The boy, pale and trembling, let the ax fall at his side and sank down upon a log. Faith took a seat beside him, and endeavored to distract his attention.

"Did you make all these chips, Wallie?" She moved some of the chips with the toe of her shoe. "Don't, Wallie," she pleaded, laying her hand on his arm. "Put down the ax. Daddy has gone to sleep, and I don't want you to wake him. Look here, Wallie. Don't chop, dear, please don't, or sister will go away and leave

you." Wallie laid down the ax and gazed at her.

"Look here, Wallie. Look at sister. Did you ever see anyone dance, Wallie? Look here, brother, and see sister dance."

Faith picked up her skirts and danced on tip-toe over the chip yard, keeping time with her head to imaginary music. Wallie watched intently, not the dancer, but her long, slim shadow as it gyrated about him, bending and swaying like a sapling in the wind. Now it whirled tall and straight with limp arms extended and soft hair flying, then, distorted and broken, like a monster in torment, it moved writhingly from end to end of the log pile. The boy watched it with increasing interest. Faith stopped suddenly, panting, and laid her hand on her brother's arm.

"Do you like it, Wallie? Do you like to see sister dance?" The boy gave a double nod, which was, in his vernacular, an assurance that he was delighted.

"Mandy can dance, Wallie; Mandy can dance beautiful. Do you want to go with sister and see Mandy dance?" Another double nod convinced Faith that her sample dance had had the desired effect.

"You stay right here, then, brother, till sister changes her clothes. Sister's going to play boy with you, Wallie. Do you remember the time we played boy and went after the cows?" Wallie almost smiled as he remembered Faith in coat and trousers riding the spotted cow home from the pasture, one bright moonlight night. Not that he saw anything ludicrous in it, but it was different from the ordinary, and it pleased him.

"Come, Wallie, I'm ready now," whispered Faith, as she walked cautiously over the treacherous chips. She had on a dark blue knickerbocker suit of Wallie's that he had outgrown, and her fluffy yellow hair was tucked under a round cap; all but the end of one mischievous curl that played in truant fashion over the back of her coat collar.

"Do I look like a boy, Wallie? I look just exactly like a boy, don't I?" Faith thrust her hands into her pockets and threw herself into a dare-devil attitude, in an unconscious endeavor to down her own doubts.

Wallie grunted and shook his head.

"I tell you I do," asserted the young masquerader, setting her foot down hard. "I look just exactly like a boy; nobody could tell I was a girl." Then, in a coaxing tone, "I look just

like a boy, don't I, Wallie?" The boy had sense enough to nod this time the question was put to him, but he scanned with doubtful eyes the fair face and the slim, white neck. These were the striking points of difference, and, though unable to differentiate minutely, he could not help noticing them after her brave assertion.

"Come on, Wallie; we must hurry. The dance begins at eight o'clock, and it's nine now. We'll ride Sam; both of us."

Judge Curtice's house was situated on an abrupt rise of ground a mile from the city limits. A long flight of stone steps led up to the barn from the rear, and from the front of the house there was a gradual slope down to the swiftly flowing Wellwood, whose sunlit waters winked through the foliage that bordered its banks. The great house on the hill was almost hidden by trees and ornamental shrubbery; only small patches of white twinkled here and there through the swaying branches. Tonight, the night of the ball, the Curtice house formed a picture of merrymaking. Japanese lanterns hung from all the trees, outlined the arch over the driveway entrance, and a blaze of soft lamp-light streamed from every window. Laughter, chatter and song mingled with the music, and

from the second story windows clouds of pink and white and blue and red could be seen swaying and whirling in arms of black. Wallie stood in a corner of the second floor veranda peeping into the ballroom. Two of the veranda windows were open, but the one in the corner where Wallie stood, had the shutters closed.

"Wallie! Wallie!" called Faith, in an explosive whisper. "Do you see her? Is she dancing?" Wallie heard Faith, but he was too absorbed in watching the dancers to reply.

"Wallie! Wallie! Help me quick. I shall die if I can't see her." At this the boy sprang down, and, taking a chair from the lower veranda, he stood upon it and boosted his sister up until she could touch the railing with her fingers.

"I can't, Wallie; don't you see I can't? Just a little higher." The boy lifted his burden until her knees rested on his shoulders, then her feet. It was easy. She climbed over the railing with the calm excitement and cool determination men feel who storm a city's walls in the face of smoking guns.

For one blissful minute Faith saw her sister whirling in the waltz, then she lost sight of her; there were so many white dresses, but none, in the eyes of Faith, so beautiful as

Amanda's. Amanda wore a white rose in her hair. Faith watched for the dark hair and the rose.

"There she comes! Oh, see her, Wallie! Just look at her. See her whirl! Oh, look at her little feet! Look, Wallie, look!" There was no need to thus urge Wallie; he was looking with both eyes, and he was also doing his best, by holding his mouth wide open, to press that member into service as an extra organ of vision.

When the music died away, Faith felt as if she had been suddenly let down to earth after floating on waves of air. How heavy she felt!

"Step back, Wallie. Back, quick. Some of 'em are coming to the windows to get cool. But I guess they're not using this one. Stand still and don't breathe." Wallie did his best to stop breathing, but he found it impracticable; his heart was thumping wildly with excitement. He glared at the windows trembling.

Faith had never heard of sane people walking out of windows; but, as in a dream, immediately following the fear of it, the seemingly impossible happened. The windows flew open as if by magic, and then two or three couples walked out of them.

Wallie leaped over the railing and disap-

peered in the shrubbery. Faith made a move as if to follow him, but an instant's hesitation, as she peered with light-blinded eyes down into what seemed a black abyss, and a firm hand grasped her arm.

"See here, bub, you'd better go down the stairway. You might break your legs jumping off there in the dark." Faith sat on the veranda railing swinging her feet with seemingly perfect indifference, her heart beating wildly. She heard the girls whispering.

"It's a girl," said a high-pitched voice. "It's a girl dressed up in boy's clothes. Just look at that sweet little curl, will you, and—and her hands."

Then there was a mumble of lower voices.

"I tell you it ith a girl. I'm going to find out. Mithter Garland, bring the boy here, we want to thpeak to him. He may be a printhe in dithguithe." The girl spoke with a little lisp. Faith's eyes flashed.

"Mith Tolliver! Come out here. We have a printhe in dithguithe. Thee if you can't perthuede him to make himthelf known!" Another couple stepped through the window. "Take this seat, Miss Tolliver," Faith heard some one say. The captive, whose arm was still held in a grip that felt like steel, broke into a cold sweat.

"Climb over here, my young man, and be introduced to the ladies." Then bending low over Faith, so that she could feel his breath on her forehead, the young man continued his expostulations.

"You really mustn't jump down there, you know, I sha'n't let you. You might hurt yourself. Come and let me introduce you as a prince; just for fun; nobody'll hurt you; then I'll let you down the stairway, and, on the way down, you'll have a chance to see the house and decorations. They're fine."

Faith, driven to the verge of desperation, and filled with determination to convince the company, if possible, that she was not a girl, by leaping, as no girl would dare to do, made a desperate effort to free her arm. Failing in this, she burst forth:

"I won't! Leggo o' me, will ye? You—you—" The fingers relaxed a little, and, as she wrenched herself free, she raised her eyes in a flash of wrath. Caleb caught a glimpse of them, but not soon enough to prevent a reckless leap to the ground.

Persuasion to remain until after refreshments were served were unavailing. Within five minutes after the disappearance of the "Prince," Caleb, hat in hand, stood before his hostess in

the wide hall. The music, mingled with the low voices of the promenaders, and the chatter and laughter of the sitters, filled his ears with a dizzying sound, and the heavy odor of cut flowers gave him a feeling of faintness. He longed to be away from the sound of revelry and the sight of butterflies. It was his first ball, and he had already decided that it should be his last. He searched the grounds thoroughly, but Faith was not to be found.

After leaping from the veranda, Wallie, without a thought of his sister, had mounted the horse and rode home, strong in the belief that he had barely escaped being murdered.

Faith, weak and faint with the pain of a sprained ankle, had managed, by the use of a stick, to reach the second crossing of the Wellwood, a mile from Hazen, where she sat on the river bank resting, and wondering if she would be able to reach home before daylight. She was winding her handkerchief tightly around the injured ankle, when the sound of a galloping horse caused her to lift her head, alarmed; and looking up to the hilltop she saw, against the star-studded grey of night, the dark silhouette of a horse and rider.

"Oh, for mercy's sake!" groaned the terrified girl. "What shall I do now? Dear Lord, help

me! If I don't look up, maybe he won't notice me much; he seems in a hurry, and of course he'll think I'm a boy. If I let him see that I'm lame, naturally he'll offer to help me, and I can't walk without limping. I'll stand still. I shall have to. I can be throwing stones into the river. He'd think it strange if I stood here at this hour, idle."

Arrived at these mental deductions, Faith gathered up a few stones of convenient size, and just as Caleb's horse plunged into the ford (the bridge was unsafe for horses) she began to whistle "Old Bob Gridley" and sent a flat stone skimming through the air, barely missing the rider's head.

"Hello!" said the young man, as, dismounting he hung the bridle rein over his arm and stepped towards the young masquerader, who had squared herself to throw another stone. The nervous strain Caleb had undergone for nearly an hour had so changed his voice, that Faith did not recognize it in his one word of salutation.

"Hello!" she replied, in a voice unusually heavy for a boy's, and keeping her eyes fixed on the river, she resumed, with apparent perfect sang-froid, the, "Ho, I ho, and ho, Bob Gridley, ho."

"What a pretty boy she makes!" thought the young man, as he stood watching Faith throw stones into the river, without winning even so much as a glance in return.

"She knows me, of course," thought he. "She's just carrying the joke on." Believing she was not hurt as he had before feared, he felt greatly relieved.

Faith, in a panic of fear lest she be recognized, and her escapade become a scandal, determined to play her rôle to the end. The moon had gone under a cloud, and as she turned her head to see if her tormentor had gone, only the outlines of a man holding a horse could she discern in the darkness. She was terrified by his continued presence, and in agony with her ankle. She prayed frantically for a moment, then she faced about suddenly in a frenzy of pain and fear, like a beast at bay, and taking a step toward the dark shadow, she burst forth:

"Why don't you go on about your business? What do you stand there watching me for? I'll hit you with a stone. I'll—I'll—" The moon slid out from behind its dark cover, and the foam flecked horse and his rider stood revealed.

"Caleb!" she faltered, staggering towards him. He sprang forward, and stooping, broke her fall with one outstretched arm.

"Are you better, Faith?" he asked a few minutes later.

"Yes, I'm all right. Why? Did I faint?"

"Well, I believe that is about what you did. You were going to fall, and I caught you." They were sitting on the ground. She moved away from his encircling arm.

"It was my ankle," she stammered. "It hurts terribly. I didn't know it was you. I didn't know who you were."

"You hurt your ankle then, did you? I feared that, and am thankful it's no worse."

"I tried to scare you away," she rattled on, in an aimless fashion. "I—I was afraid. I didn't want him—you, I mean, to see me—this way." Faith's nerves were severely shaken.

"You tried to scare me away by threatening to hit me with a stone, did you? I doubt if you could hit me with a stone, Faith." She was gazing towards the river.

"I wanted you to think I was a boy; one of the bad city boys, you know,—so you would be afraid and go away."

"But I'm a boy, myself. I shouldn't be afraid of a boy. I should be much more afraid of a girl."

"What are you here for, Caleb? Are you just going home from the ball?"

"If I were, would I be going east?"

"Did you come after me? Have you been to our house? How did you get here so soon?"

"Yes, I came after you. I went to your house first; I didn't know where to go. Fast riding was the cause of my getting here so soon. We will sit quietly a few minutes, Faith, and then we'll start home. You are nervous. How you are trembling!" He took one of her hands, but she drew it away seeming to have use for it. She pushed her cap back from her forehead.

"It was good of you to come after me, Caleb, but I wish you'd go; I really do."

"Really?"

"Yes, really. You don't—understand. Do you think they knew me?"

"I think Ben and Mandy did. I hardly think anyone else recognized you."

"I could have got away all right if you hadn't held me. What made you hang on so? You hurt my arm. Oh, I was angry."

"I was afraid you'd injure yourself. I didn't know you till you looked up. I'm sorry I hurt you."

"Did I look up? I didn't mean to."

"Yes. Didn't you know it?"

"I was afraid I did; I wasn't sure."

"Did you know when you jumped that you were going to land on a brick pavement?"

"No, but it wouldn't have made any difference; I was scared nearly to death. I wish you'd go on home, Caleb."

"Don't be foolish, Faith. You're going to ride my horse."

"No, I'm going to walk. You said one day that your horse wouldn't carry double."

"He will tonight; he'll have to. You can't walk, Faith. It's nonsense to think of it. I will not leave you to walk, so don't entertain the thought for a moment."

"You will not?"

"No, I will not. If it is your costume, I tell you frankly, I never saw you look better. You are the jauntiest, prettiest boy I ever laid my eyes on."

Faith's eyes filled.

"How would you like to have me see you in girls' clothes; I should like to know?" Caleb had hard work to suppress a smile, but he maintained a serious and rather severe expression.

"If you ever do see me so, I shall try to be sensible. At least I shall endeavor not to be silly." His tone was cutting. Faith sprang up. The few minutes of rest had stiffened her

ankle, and the pain, whenever she attempted the least use of it, was severe, but she lifted her head proudly.

"I am going to ride just as you advise, Mr. Garland. Not because of what you said, but because I can't walk. I shall never speak to you again, though." As she stepped towards the horse, again she reeled and would have fallen, but for Caleb's timely arm.

"Why didn't you let me sit behind you, Caleb? That's the way I always ride with Daddy. This way isn't—isn't easy. I'm in your way, too."

"I couldn't hold you if you sat behind me. I shouldn't dare let you ride behind me; you might faint and fall off. I'm sorry you're uncomfortable. I'm glad, though, that you've changed your mind. I'm pleased to find that you do sometimes change it."

"Changed my mind about what?"

"About speaking to me."

"Oh!" There was a long silence, then Faith moved uneasily.

"You don't need to hold me," she said, with a note of irritation in her voice. "I can ride a horse; I could ride alone."

"Would you prefer to ride alone?"

"I shouldn't like to have you walk. I don't

wish to ride alone—but—but—I should think you'd need both arms to guide the horse. Look: he's going crooked."

"But he's following the path."

There was silence for a few minutes.

"How dark it is!" observed Faith. Her voice shook a little.

"Yes, it is rather dark just now."

"Oh, what is that ahead? What are we going into, Caleb? Is it water?"

"There is no cause for alarm; it's only some tall grass."

"I'm not alarmed. Isn't that some one coming over yonder? I'm sure it is. It's a man and he's coming towards us."

"No. It's only a dead tree. It isn't coming, it's standing perfectly still." There was a long silence. A warm drop trembled for a moment on the point of Faith's chin, then fell upon Caleb's wrist. The arm about her tightened. He bent his head until his cheek touched her hair.

"What makes you cry, Faith? Why do you feel so? What can I do to please you? You don't trust me at all. Shall I get off and walk?"

"No. I wouldn't let you."

"Then why do you feel bad?"

"Because I went. I wish I'd staid at home

where I belong. I ought to have known better; but I was so anxious to see Mandy dance. Then I'm sorry because I put these on, and I—I—" She hesitated.

"Go on. What else?"

"I don't want you to hold me. You oughtn't to put your arms around me. I can sit alone."

"Is that all?"

"I should think it was enough."

"Surely, it is. If you will allow me to begin with your last complaint, being the only one for which I am responsible, I will say: if I didn't hold you, you would fall, if you should happen to faint, and Prince might step on—

"I'm not going to faint."

"You can't be sure of that. You've fainted twice, you know."

"I didn't," she protested, poutingly. "I didn't faint the last time. I knew where I was all the time; I was only dizzy."

"People have been known to fall from dizziness," observed Caleb. The horse was walking slowly through the tall grass, with a step that was elastic and sure. Caleb, as if impelled by an irresistible force, suddenly dropped the reins over the saddle and clasped Faith in his arms.

"Oh, don't be angry, Faith. Please don't be angry. I love you. You are the only girl I ever held in my arms, and the only one I ever cared to hold. I have loved you for two years, Faith. Think of it! Oh, you don't know what you have been to me. Can't you love me, just a little, dear? Ever so little?" There was no reply. Faith made no effort to free herself. She could feel the violent throbbing of his heart. She tried to speak, but her voice, for the moment, refused to obey.

"If you cannot, Faith; if you feel that you do not love me, even a little, tell me so frankly. Have no fear of hurting me." Still she was silent.

"Say this, Faith: say it after me—it may do me good. 'I would rather you did not hold me in your arms, Caleb, because I do not love you, and I feel sure I never can love you, even a little.' Say it, Faith. Then I'll get off and let you ride alone, if you wish it."

"I can't Caleb," she faltered at last, "I can't say it, because—"

"Because what, dear?" The arms closed more firmly about her, and his warm breath was on her cheek.

"Because it wouldn't be true."

The moon came out again bright and clear just as the riders reached the summit of the hill; the highest point between Hazen and the Corners.

"You mustn't do that again, Caleb. You positively mustn't."

"Mustn't do what, Faith? Mustn't kiss you?"

"You mustn't so much," she replied, half offended.

"So much? Why, I've kissed you only once, dear, only once."

"Yes, but you made it last almost all the way up the hill."

"I shall kiss you like that every hour in the day after we are married."

"Then you'll never do anything else." They both laughed a little.

"Show me the way you think lovers ought to kiss one another, Faith. Perhaps I don't know the proper way; but I'm willing to be taught."

"Indeed, I will not. I don't know, either," she replied, blushing deeply. "What road is that we're coming to, Caleb? Isn't this Cuthbert's mill?"

"Yes."

"Why, what in the world made you come this way? It's a mile farther."

"Is it?" asked the young lover, with an air of innocence.

"You know it is. I believe you did it on purpose."

"I confess that I'm not in a particular hurry. How is your ankle?"

"I had forgotten it; but since you have made me think of it, it is painful."

"Forget it, then. You see Prince is carrying double without the slightest objection."

"Yes." They were silent for a few moments. "I was never so astonished in my life, Caleb." Faith's voice was just above a whisper.

"Astonished at what, darling? Because Prince carries double? He's a good friend of mine." Faith caught her breath and a rush of blood warmed her cheeks. No one but her mother had ever called her "darling," and that was like a dim, almost-forgotten dream.

"At—why—at what you told me a while ago," she faltered.

"Astonished that I love you?"

"Yes, very much indeed."

"No one else who knows you would be in the least astonished, I'm sure. Why, I have fancied you knew it, Faith. I felt it so deeply that it seemed to me you must see it. I thought, the

day you colored the yarn, that you had found me out and were angry with me."

"Oh no. That was the day I found myself out," declared Faith, with regretable haste.

"Faith! Was it really? Oh, if I had known it!

"It was the day I—found out—that I—had better—'tend to my work," she added, in an attempt to modify her declaration.

"Don't try to rob me, Faith. Tell me you love me; you haven't said so yet."

"But I've just the same; I let you kiss me, and I wouldn't have—"

"I know you wouldn't, dear. It's just the same; of course; but it would make me very, very happy to hear you say it. You will say it some day, won't you, Faith?"

"Maybe—if—"

"If what, dear?"

"If I find that I really do," she replied with a teasing smile.

"You're not sure, then? he asked anxiously.

"Oh, Caleb! Don't you know me yet?" He could see the soul of love in her dear eyes as she gazed a little reproachfully into his, and he was satisfied.

About ten days after the Curtice ball, Faith received a letter from Amanda saying that she

was coming home on the following Sunday and would bring a friend with her.

"Have everything in the best of order," she wrote, "have father put his coat on, and above all, keep Wallie out of sight. It would be nice to have something dainty for a little lunch. We shall not stay long, and, Faith, I have something very important to tell you." A look of pain came into Faith's face.

Faith did not go to meeting the next Sunday; she sat at the window watching for Mandy and her friend. They drove up to the gate at last—Amanda and Benjamin Curtice.

After a half hour of rambling conversation, in which no one felt at ease, Mr. Curtice, having indicated to Amanda's father that he would like a little private conversation with him, was invited out to the barn to see the colts. Faith sat watching her sister with troubled eyes. They had had a few words in private upstairs: the secret was out.

"Come on out to the gate, Faith. I don't like sitting here. How do you ever get your hair up that way? It's very stylish and becoming. I wonder if I could do mine so."

"Oh, I just give it a twist or two and stick the pins in, that's all."

"Now, I'll go on. Let me see, what was I

telling you? Oh, yes, now I know, about my ring. How do you like it? It's a solitaire."

"Oh, it's beautiful, Mandy, but I thought you said it was a diamond."

"It is a diamond, Faith. Any precious stone set alone is called a solitaire. I thought you knew that much."

"How could you expect me to know? I never saw a diamond, and I never heard of a solitaire; I thought it was some kind of a stone. I don't pretend to know much, and I never expect to now."

"Why do you say, 'now,' Faith? Tell me what you mean by 'now?'"

"Why, I thought you were coming home to live after you graduated, and that we should have the same good times together we used to have. I thought I could learn lots of things from you without going to school; you said I could. Now, I shall never know anything. It's an awful grief to me to have to give up your coming on account of your company, too. It takes the—the—well, the life out of everything. I'm jealous of Ben. He hasn't any business to take you away from us." And letting restraint go, tears streamed down her uncovered face.

"I didn't suppose you capable of jealousy, Faith; I'm disappointed. I never could be con-

tented here in this little weather-worn house, with no carpets and not a decent piece of furniture. I should be wretched. I hate the old things."

"Then you'd better not come back; certainly not; if that's the way you feel, Mandy." Faith wiped her cheeks, straightened up, and her tears ceased to flow.

"To tell you the honest truth," pursued the elder sister, "I'd rather stay single a few years yet if I had a pretty home to live in and money to buy nice clothes and books. I'm fond of Ben, in a way, and he adores me—says he can't live without me, and all that, you know. I could live without him and not half try." Faith turned pale and leaned her head against the tree.

"Faith, are you sick? You're as white as marble. Don't look that way. You look—frozen."

"And yet you are going to marry him, Mandy? Tell me this: Does Ben think you love him? Do you pretend that you do?" Faith's eyes, as she gazed into those of her sister, carried such a weight of innocent accusation, that Amanda shrank under it and turned her head away without replying.

"Don't do it, Mandy. Oh, don't. It's wicked. You'll get punished, you will, Mandy."

"Don't be silly, Faith. A great many marry without"—a sound of voices arrested Amanda's speech.

"There they come. Father is going to object; I can see it in the way he moves, but it will make no difference; I'm of age."

"Mandy! You wouldn't—"

"Yes I would." Stubborn determination hardened Amanda's face, and there was an unlovely glitter in her eyes when she looked up, at her father's approach. Faith sighed, and folded her hands passively.

Alexander had taken off his coat and rolled his shirt sleeves up above his elbows. This was a thing he rarely failed to do when excited, agitated or deeply interested. Hannah had often told Amanda and Faith that she lost all enjoyment in their mother's funeral through not daring to take her eyes off her brother, lest he pull off his coat and roll up his sleeves; and she stoutly declared that if she could have had a dollar for every time she prevented him doing so by stepping on his toes, she could have paid the funeral expenses twice over and had enough left to buy a very decent grave "stun."

"So you're thinkin' 'bout goin' off an' leavin' us, be ye, Mandy?" Alexander's words were thrown out as if he did not like the taste of them. "I've been calc'latin' on your comin' home to give yer sister a chance; that was the bargain, wa'n't it?" Then turning to his younger daughter, "Go inter the house, Faithful, and set a 'piece' on the table if you're goin' to; I want ter hev a little talk with yer sister alone." This was said with a sweeping glance over the young man at his side, who walked away, industriously chewing a straw.

Faith, giving her sister a glance of admonition tempered with sympathy, walked slowly toward the house. With her hand on the kitchen door latch, she paused, glancing back at the two under the tree. Amanda was looking down at her white hands that lay clenched in her lap. Her father stood with folded arms, looking down at her. There was a look of trouble and anxiety in Faith's eyes, when, a half hour later her father came in alone, and she sank into a chair.

"Oh, Daddy! They're gone. What made you let them go? Oh, what made you?"

"Wa'al, Mandy sassed me, 'n' I told her 't I guessed we c'd git along without her. This house ain't good 'nough fer her sence she's been

to the city; she wants carpits and picters an' things, so I jes' told her right out plain she might go an' stay if she wanted to, she was gittin' too dam fine fer us. I vow, I never see sech a sassy girl."

"Oh, Daddy! You quarreled with Mandy?"

"Wa'al, I guess you kin call it that if you want tew; it wa'n't nothin' else. She's ashamed of her brother; she said so right out an' out, and she's ashamed o' me too. I've seen it stickin' out a good while, but I hain't said nothin'. She don't want me to say much when her comp'ny comes. She tole me so once. S'pose I don't talk proper 'nough to suit her. It's hurt my feelin's terrible, but I've kep' it to myself. Didn't hev nobody to send me to school—when I was a boy—m' father died—had to work—ter take care o' mother an' Dick." A cough grappled with a sob in the old man's throat as he bent to hide the struggle, and lay a stick of wood on the dead ashes.

"She don't never want ter set eyes on her home agin. She said so."

"Mandy didn't mean it, Daddy; she was angry."

"We've worked like 'Sam Hill' to send her to school," continued the old man, "an' this's

what we git for it." With his fingers Alexander combed his iron grey beard that hung from his chin in the shape of a whisk broom.

They sat on opposite sides of the table. Faith ate crumbs that choked her, and her father, in an unconscious endeavor to show that his appetite was not affected by the quarrel, ate, or rather swallowed in great gulps, four pieces of cake, then he put on his hat and went out to the barn. Faith sat a long time at the table, brushing crumbs into little heaps on the clean table-cloth, and gazing out over the wood pile.

"I guess he thought the cake was bread. Poor Daddy. He didn't touch his tea. I shall have to throw it out. Do you want it, Wallie?" The boy settled the question of the tea without a word and helped himself to the largest piece of cake.

"Wallie, don't take so much into your mouth at once. Daddy doesn't do that way; nor Mr. Nathan, nor Uncle Dick. Uncle Dick is coming to see us next Sunday. You watch him when he comes, and try to do as he does. Will you, dear?"

"No, I won't" declared the boy with a pout.

"Wallie, do you want to make sister cry?" He shook his head vigorously.

Faith in tears was the one thing that could move Wallie. She had brought him into subjection many times by simulated sobs, but he had learned to distinguish between the false and the true.

"Wallie, you make Faith very unhappy because you don't try to act like other people. Won't you try?—just to please sister." The boy shook his head, and, taking another piece of cake, crammed the whole of it into his mouth and swallowed it, blinking. Faith burst into tears, and wept as if quite discouraged. Wallie's eyes filled with tears and he pushed Faith's bowed head.

"Stop, sister, stop! Wallie won't—eat—any more—cake," he blubbered. And as Faith raised her head, he held a piece of the cake to her lips. "Sister eat it. Wallie'll be good boy—won't eat cake—any more." Faith smiled.

"That isn't what sister meant, dear. Put the cake back; Faith doesn't want it. Listen, and try to understand. You may eat cake, but don't fill your mouth so full."

"Like Uncle Dick," suggested the boy.

"Yes, like Uncle Dick. Sister's very sad, Wallie. Mandy is never coming home to live any more. She's going to get married. We

shall have to live here without her, always. Just you, and Daddy, and I. Faith can't ever get married. She'll have to stay here till she gets old and let everybody else get married and be happy. She forgot for a few days—forgot her duty, and thought she might be happy, too. But she remembers now that it's impossible. So she has just made up her mind to stay here with you and Daddy, in mother's place. Caleb will marry some other girl—" She choked here and fresh tears coursed down her cheeks. "Sister can't ever go to school any more, either, Wallie, and that's another reason why she can't get married. Girls who can't be educated shouldn't get married." Thus Faith sought relief in word expression, while Wallie swooped flies off the table with his hand.

"Don't Wallie. Don't pull the flies to pieces. It's cruel." He stopped instantly. Faith smiled. "You do love sister, don't you, Wallie?" For reply, the boy took her in his arms and kissed her cheek.

"I know he's getting better—I just know it; I don't care what Mandy says. What if he should get well—or nearly well? what if he should. I'd go to school first—and graduate—and then—" A smile that was like sunshine in

mist overspread her face, and as she cleared the table she hummed, in a low voice, a cradle song. It is so easy for the young to hope.

Amanda's wedding cards were out. Hannah had just fetched them from the postoffice at the Corners.

"Are you going, Aunt Hannah?"

"No. I ain't goin'." Hannah threw out her words as if they were uncomfortably hot. She had seated herself, with unusual emphasis, in a straight back chair. She was particularly partial to rocking chairs, but this morning she was not in a rocking mood. She shut her snuff box with a snap. The stiff little iron grey curls that hung on her cheeks jiggled about spitefully as if at one with her in feeling.

"I like weddin's," she continued; "they ain't nothin' I like better 'nless it's a fust-class funeral, but I ain't goin' on no such invitation as she has sent me."

"Why, didn't you get one like this, Aunt Hannah?"

"Yes, but I got a letter from her yistiddy."

"What in the world did she say? Was it unkind?"

"She tole me what to wear and what to say when folks spoke to me. I ain't use ter that.

Guess I know what to say's well 's the next one. They can't nobody git ahead o' me when it comes to talkin'. That's my strongest pint. Hezekier use' ter say 't I beat all the women he ever see. He said 't I c'd talk him inter the headache an' out again afore most women c'd turn 'round. She tole me to wear my brown silk, and she said she wished I'd cut the cape off, 'cause 'twas out o' fashion."

In Hannah's eyes, this was the crowning insult to her best dress. Amanda had suggested various other changes.

"Why, they's four yards o' fringe on that cape, an' eight yards o' gimp trimmin'. I see myself a cuttin' of it off. It's the handsomest part o' the hull dress. It took Miss Sykes two days to make that cape."

"Who is Miss Sykes, Aunt Hannah?"

"She was Mis' Blackmore's second cousin. She passed away, poor thing, some'rs about eight year ago this comin' fall. She died with consumption. Commonest kind of disease," observed Hannah, in a contemptuous whisper. "I sh'd hate dretfully to die with it."

"What else did Mandy—"

"Oh, yes. She tole me 't I would be doin' her a favor to say nothn' 'bout the misery in my stummick. She said that when folks ast how

I was, they didn't want ter know, an' they didn't expect me to go an' tell 'em. She said 'twas allus best to say you was well whether you was or not. Now I ain't goin' to do no sech thing. When folks ask me how I be, I'm goin' to tell 'em the truth. No, I ain't goin' to the weddin', Faithful, I ain't goin' a step."

Faith walked out to the gate with her Aunt Hannah, where they sat for half an hour in earnest conversation. Faith had done the most of the talking; Hannah's part in it having been almost entirely of an exclamatory nature.

"Wa'al, when's this wonderful pussen a comin'?" Hannah's nose was in the air, and her tone was incredulous.

"He's here now. Caleb, with Daddy's and my consent, wrote to him about it two weeks ago, but he couldn't come then. He's here now on his vacation. He thinks all Wallie's trouble is caused by a pressure on the brain,—where the indenture is—that could be relieved by such an operation as I have described to you; trephining they call it. His father—young Dr. Gaylord's father—is an eminent surgeon—he has performed some wonderful cures—and Wallie will be in his care. I shall go along, of course. Now, what do you think about it, Aunt Hannah?"

"Wa'al, I don't b'lieve the Lord ever calc'lated to hev us saw holes in folkses heads to git sense intew 'em. That ain't the way He does. I don't b'lieve in no sech doin's, an I ain't goin' to say 't I dew."

Fortunately, Caleb's friend, the young Dr. Gaylord, won Wallie's heart with little effort. They went together, hunting, fishing and swimming, and when, after a fortnight's stay, the young doctor was ready to go home, Wallie was not only willing but anxious to go with him.

Three weeks later, a letter from Boston brought the good news that Wallie was out of danger from the operation, and that the improvement in his mental condition was great.

"You wouldn't know him, Daddy," wrote Faith. "He is so white, and he talks much more than he ever did before. He does ask such odd questions! Oh, how I love him, Daddy! my own, dear brother. And how I love God for giving him back to us. I long to have you see him and to have all the neighbors see his beautiful, intelligent face—and particularly those who have called him our 'Fool.' God forgive them. He smiled at me today, and it made me so happy I cried. I hid my face in the bed clothes, and he smoothed my hair. I

think he must love me, don't you think so? I have written to Caleb thanking him for his kindness, and I wish you would thank him too, for it was he suggested the operation and insisted upon it until we were almost offended with him. And, Daddy, here is something you do not know: Caleb sent for the doctor to come to see Wallie. He did not come for a vacation as we supposed, and Caleb obligated himself to pay the bills, but don't tell him we found it out. Now, we can pay our own bills, thank the Lord and dear old Uncle Dick. Wallie is looking at me now. He says it is medicine time, and it is; just four o'clock. He has the doctor's watch and he has already learned to tell the time, and only think, Daddy, we have been here but seven weeks yesterday. You asked me about the fits. I thought I had told you. He has had no sign of a fit since the operation, and the doctor says he will never have any more. I'm so glad Aunt Hannah at last is coming to live with us. With love to her and to all.

"Your happy daughter,
"Faithful Evalyn Tolliver."

A long, wet winter had passed, and Faith again sat in the sunshine among the roses.

Caleb sat by her side, and Prince, the proudest, sleekest six-year-old in the county, waltzed with impatient nodding around the hitching post. Wallie sat on the door-step with his chin resting in one hand.

"What's he doing, Faith?"

"He's reading in my old first reader. This is the second time he has read it through. Don't you think he is doing well?"

"How could he help it with such a teacher? What a handsome boy Wallie is! He looks well in his new suit."

"Yes, my brother is handsome, isn't he? Everybody says so." Faith was fond of saying "my brother." Her eyes followed Wallie as he rose, slipped the reader into his pocket and started out towards the barn, whistling as he walked along.

"He learned that from you, Caleb."

"What, whistling?"

"No, jumping." Wallie glanced back innocently after he had overleapt the gate, to see if his feat had been remarked.

For years Wallie seemed a little queer at times, but nature's kind hands were slowly but surely gathering up the lost threads that had so long lain loose in the fine fabric of his mind.

"I never saw you look so happy, Faith, and

it rejoices my heart, but I am, like all men, selfish; and I cannot help wishing that you loved me well enough to give up your idea of graduating and make me happy, too. You could go on studying as you are—you could have an instructor if you wished. I haven't a very attractive future to offer you, it is true: I shall soon be preaching at Pemberton Brook in a little church not much bigger than a mouse trap, and I shall have to go there every Sunday rain or shine. I thought I wouldn't mention this again, but as I tell you, I'm selfish: I should like to be happy." Caleb looked very forlorn. "I know, too, how futile it is to urge you, for your heart is set on the form of graduating; you've made up your mind, and that settles it, I suppose." Caleb spoke with some bitterness. Faith smiled quizzically, but Caleb was not looking at her; he was examining the handle of his umbrella; one of the rivets in the name plate had become loosened, and he was trying to press it back with his thumb nail.

"You certainly wouldn't wish me to change my mind after I've got it all made up, Caleb."

"Indeed I would," was the quick reply. "It would do you good; you're just a little too—too—"

"Stubborn?"

"N—no—determined, I think is the word."

"I tell you, you do not wish me to change my mind, Caleb. Because I've changed it once; I changed it last night after you went home. If I should change it again, you'd have to ride all alone to that little 'mouse trap of a—'

"Caleb! How you scared me. You were so quick," stammered Faith blushing. "No one could see us out here; the shrubbery's too thick. Aunt Hannah? Oh, she's busy getting supper—she hardly ever looks out of the window, anyway."

Faith's cheeks were blazing with color, as a moment later, Caleb backed towards the gate, laughing, and she turned to go into the house.

"It's the very last time I shall ever reprove you for haste, Caleb Garland, so now! You needn't come over tomorrow; I shall not be at home." And with her golden head held high, she moved slowly towards the house, glancing back over her shoulder now and again, at the tall, willowy form of her lover, riding at an easy canter towards the woods. She waited on the kitchen porch until he was about to pass under the Green Arch, when she raised her handkerchief over her head and let it flutter for

a moment like a tiny white bird held by the leg. He turned just in time to see a twinkle of it, and smiling, raised his hat as he disappeared into the dusky woods. A happier face and a lighter heart never passed under the Green Arch.

" 'Pears to me, Faithful, 't you'd ort ter hev a leetle somethin' or other 'round yer shoulders when you set out after sundown. What a jumper young Mr. Garland is!"

"A jumper?"

"Yes. I've been sewin' there by the winder and I see him jump over the fence. Why laws a me, he never even teched it. 'That's jest the way yer Uncle Hezekier use' ter c'd jump afore we was married." The accusation in the emphasized "we" did not escape Faith, and the dimples in her cheeks deepened, but she said nothing, as she had already decided to tell Aunt Hannah all about it after supper.

They sat talking on the door-step. The full moon shone in their faces with a clear silver light. Faith had just paused after telling her secret. A cricket somewhere under the porch sang an interlude, then Hannah burst forth.

"Wa'al, for massy's sakes alive! You don't tell! I never heerd o' the like in all my born days. It jes' seems to me 's if I can't stan' it

nohow. 'The idee! In six weeks, did ye say? Why, laws a me! 'That's dretful soon. An' you're goin' on studyin' to home—after you're married. I hain't a word to say agin it, though; not a single word. He's jest the likeliest feller 't I know of. He makes me think o' Hezekier every time I see him jump over the fence." Hannah wiped off with her apron the tears that were streaming down her face. They sat, silent, for a few minutes. Already Hannah's provident nature had begun action in the new field that lay open before her. The cricket went on with his song, and Tiger rubbed his smooth sides against Faith's arm, pleading with soft purring for his meed of attention.

"Do you like that red star quilt o' mine, Faithful? Er would you ruther the basket pattern? You kin hev jest whichever one you like best, an' you kin hev jest as many yarbs as you need; I'll jest divide with ye. I've got more leptander 'n I kin ever use. You can hev half I've got. You kin have some saffron, too, an' some catnip. I hain't got much catnip, but you kin hev all I've got. I gin a'most all I had to Mis' Blackmore's niece when her twins was born. I'll gether a lot o' fresh when I go down to Pemberton again. They's lots there." There was another silence. Tiger, emboldened

by Faith's gently smoothing his fur, had coiled himself up in her lap for a doze.

"I s'pose you'll 'stand up' in white, Faithful." Faith nodded, adding: "I suppose so, but I hadn't thought about it."

"What would you think—ud—look best—for me to—wear?" Hannah spoke with hesitation. Her brown silk had received one severe snub, and the fear of another weakened her voice, though her own faith in her best dress had weathered the storm of abuse and remained unshaken. Faith looked up quickly.

"Why, wear your brown silk, of course."

"Jest as 'tis, Faithful?—with the shoulder cape?" This was the "tug of war," and the poor old woman choked with apprehension.

"Why, certainly with the cape on. And you must wear your lace collar, and your cameo breastpin, and your gold chain, with the seal pencil."

"Yes, I guess that'll look jest about as well 's anything 't I've got," she replied, with bridled acquiescence. As she turned her head, the moon shone full in her face; it was a picture of content; her beloved finery was vindicated, and would once more shine at a wedding. The leaves rustled softly as they sat, silent. Hannah spoke in a low tone.

"Mine's a'most jest the color of a new one Mrs. Bridgman had on to meetin', one day, two—three weeks ago."

"What, Aunt Hannah?"

"My brown silk dress. I say it's a'most jest the color o' one Mis' Bridgman wears."

"Mrs. Bridgman wears black now, poor thing," observed Faith. "You know she lost her son last week. He was one of Mandy's teachers."

"Oh, yes. He was one of the p'ofessers I heerd you an' Mandy an' Ben talkin' 'bout 'tother day, that died settin' up in his chair. What was it Mandy said he died with in his hands, Faithful?"

"The curriculum, Aunt Hannah. He died sitting at his desk with the curriculum in his hands."

"Poor dear man, how he must 'a' suffered! My han's has felt kinder queer lately—'pears to be a kind of—wa'al I dunno's I kin jes' tell—but when I fust wake up in the morin', they's a kind of a—What'd you say, Faithful? What be you smilin' for?"

"Why, I said I hadn't heard you complain for a long time of the misery in your stomach, or the agony in your left leg. I guess they must have got well, haven't they?" For a moment

Hannah seemed a little disconcerted at the observation of her niece, then she said:

"I've had so much to do an' to think about an' to ten' to sence I've been stayin' over here, 't I've neglected myself shameful. I'll go right straight off and make me some penerile tea an' drink it."

THE WIDOW PERKINS

THE WIDOW PERKINS

"Dear me, there's a fly! first one I've seen this spring. Merandy, I wish you'd come in here an' ketch this fly. There he is, a-settin' on that tidy."

Tabitha Perkins was a widow. She sat by the window, felling the seams of a nightgown. She was a tall, thin, dignified woman of fifty, with a face that would have been comely had it been less severe. She thought more about her enemies than about her friends; more about the cruelty and injustice of mankind than about the mercy and goodness of God. She had dressed since she was forty in either grey or black. She wore her silvery brown hair in three long curls on either side, with the remainder twisted into a knot, high on the crown of her head. A broad tortoise shell comb surmounted the knot.

Tabitha was painfully industrious and obtrusively neat. It had even been said that she scoured the nail heads in the board fence in front of her house, and that she had five

different dish cloths in daily use. She denied stoutly ever having scoured the nail heads, but owned up frankly to the five dish cloths. They were all marked neatly in a corner with red thread and hung in a row over the sink. On the first one were the letters "M. P. & P."—milk pail and pans; on the next one, "G. W."—glass ware; on the next, "C. & S."—cups and saucers; the next, "A. O. D. & C."—all other dishes and cutlery; and the last one in the row, which was a size larger than the others, was marked "I. W. & S."—iron ware and stove.

Miranda Jenkins was a niece of the widow Perkins, the orphan child of her only brother. She was about twenty-four and had lived with her aunt since she was five years old. She was almost dwarfish in size, with a white, freckled face, large, yellowish grey eyes, and an abundance of red hair. She gave one, at a passing glance, the impression of being mostly eyes and hair, and it was not until after recovering from the peculiar shock produced by so much eyes and hair, that one saw her pleasant, passive face and pretty, childish lips emerging, as it seemed, from a shadow.

Miranda Jenkins rarely gave expression to her thoughts. The widow Perkins, in her en-

deavor to improve upon the maxim that young people should be seen and not heard, had taught her niece that she should be neither seen nor heard. If asked her opinion on any subject, Miranda's reply was almost invariably, "I dunno, what do you think?"

The people of the village rarely took the trouble to address any remarks to her now beyond the customary, "how di do," many considering her dull. Only the few who knew her intimately, and had noticed the unspoken philosophy and originality of her ways, gave her credit for ordinary intelligence.

Mrs. Perkins watched her niece with untiring vigilance lest she drift into slovenly habits. Uncleanliness, in Tabitha's unwritten creed, was almost the unpardonable sin. She would pounce upon the girl at unexpected moments, snatch the dish cloth from her hands, and examine the embroidered letters in the corner to make sure that the blood of her ancestors was not being disgraced by a Jenkins forming untidy habits.

Both women wore felt shoes about the house because leather ones were wearing on the carpet; consequently their footsteps were as noiseless as those of a cat.

There were four rooms in the little one story cottage besides the kitchen, parlor, sitting-room and two bedrooms. The parlor was furnished with a bright Brussels carpet, with large, sprawling figures, plain muslin curtains, a set of black haircloth furniture, and a small marble center table. The principal ornaments were a straw-and-bead "air-castle" hanging from the ceiling, a hair wreath in a frame, a large picture of Washington on horseback, and some wax pond lilies under a glass globe on the table.

In the sitting-room was a striped rag carpet, flag-bottom chairs, and numerous home-made rugs of braided rags.

Miranda came in from the kitchen with a little hitch in her step; one leg was shorter than the other.

"Where is the fly, Aunt Tabby?"

"Why, right there on the back o' the rockin' chair. Now be sure you git him, Merandy; flies do make a house look so untidy, an' it puts me all on aige to see one."

"Yes'm," murmured the girl. Miranda drew back her arm and took aim. With a swoop that whirled her half round, her hand skimmed the back of the chair. She opened her fist one finger at a time, while her intended victim

sat on the edge of the pink china lamp shade, rubbing his head with his forelegs in a congratulatory fashion.

"Did ye git him, Mirandy" asked her aunt without looking up.

"No, he got away."

"You're too slow, child, you're too mortal slow. Now, where is that fly? I s'pose I'll hev to ketch him myself. Oh, there he is on the lamp shade; I see him. Now, don't you come near or you'll scare him."

Miranda, with her arms behind her, backed up against the wall and stood still. Tabitha laid down her work and stepped cautiously toward the small, wary intruder, her long arm extended.

"Now you watch me, Merandy; you'll see 't you've got to be quick to ketch a fly."

She made a nice calculation, brought her hand down with a sweeping stroke, and the pink lamp shade lay in a thousand fragments at her feet.

"Did ye git him, Aunt Tabby?" asked the girl, stepping forward without a change in the expression of her face.

"Of course I did," she snapped out, giving her niece a withering look. "Seems to me you couldn't 'a' fastened that shade on very well,

Merandy. Go git that blue one and wash it, an' sweep up these pieces."

"Why, don't ye know you put the shade on yerself while I was cleanin'—There must 'a' been two flies, Aunt Tabby, fer there's one now settin' right on top o' your comb. Hold reel still an' I'll be quick an' see if I can't ketch him;" and Miranda drew back her arm.

"No, never mind the fly, Merandy, go out an' ten' to yer beans; 'pears to me I smell 'em burnin'."

"O, no ye don't, I ain't put 'em on yet, they're soakin'."

"Well, then, put 'em on or they won't git done fer dinner."

Tabitha picked up her work and resumed her sewing. She always sewed as if her life depended upon it, rarely taking time to glance out of the window, excepting when she unreeled and bit off a new thread, when she could glance up and down the road without losing any time. The needle came up with a little more of a jerk than usual after the fly hunt, but it soon subsided into the regular, even motion.

Mrs. Perkins had a way of giving herself "stents," and she would do her stent if she had to sit up half the night.

"Why, there comes Mary Blake. I wonder

what she wants. I hope her mother ain't got another turn, she jest hed one last week."

Tabitha bit off her thread and set the spool back on the window sill. The door was wide open.

The child stood on the step, rapping with her soft knuckles on the door post without making as much noise as the pecking of a fledgling. She stepped about, lifting one foot then the other; the sun shining on the stone step had heated it, so that it burned her bare feet. Tabitha could see the edge of her blue dress and she wondered why she didn't come in; she had no idea the child was knocking.

"Come in, Mary, what ye standin' there fer?"

The little girl edged slowly in, with one finger between her lips, and slid sideways into the first chair she came to. Her black eyes shone like polished ebony under her pink sunbonnet, and she kept them fixed in an apprehensive gaze on Tabitha's face. Her little brown toes hung about four inches from the floor; one of them had a dirty rag wound round it.

"How's yer ma, Mary?" The child cleared her throat a little, and blushed, but made no reply. Tabitha took a few more stitches and looked up again.

"Is she pretty well?"

No reply. Tabitha took a few more stitches. "You've got a sore toe, ain't ye, Mary?"

The little girl glanced down at the injured member, then back to the woman's face as if her eyes were drawn there by a magnetism too strong to overcome.

Tabitha went on sewing, forgetting the child's presence until she looked up to reel off another thread.

"Yer ma ain't got another turn, has she, Mary? She's pretty well, ain't she?"

There was an almost imperceptible nod of the pink sunbonnet; Tabitha thought she saw the strings move a little, then a double sigh, almost a sob, shook the child's frame.

"Here's an empty spool fer ye, Mary, come an' git it if ye want it. I must go in the bedroom now an' git a new spool; I'll be right back," she added, soothingly; but when she returned, her visitor and the empty spool had disappeared.

"I do wonder what the child wanted. I guess I'll go over and see. 'Twon't take me more than fifteen minutes, an' I can finish my stent b'fore candle light if I do leave it a few minutes. I can toe off that stockin' as I walk along."

Tabitha walked down the road with slow, measured steps, looking up only when she knit

a needle out. When she reached Mrs. Blake's gate, she rolled up her work and put it in her knitting bag that hung at her side.

Mrs. Blake was weeding the garden. Tabitha thought the onion bed came too near the front door, and she was just thinking when Mrs. Blake looked up, that if she were obliged to use her front yard for a vegetable garden, she would have sown lettuce, or sage, or parsley close to the door, and put the onions as far away as possible.

"Why, how di do, Mis' Perkins? I hope ye ain't come over to tell me you an' Mirandy can't come to the sewin' bee, you're sech a fast—"

"What sewin' bee? I ain't heard o' no sewin' bee."

"Why, I sent Mary over to ask ye," said Mrs. Blake, wiping her warm, dusty face on a corner of her apron. "You know I intended to hev it last week, but I had a turn. It's tomorrer afternoon, Mis' Perkins. Didn't Mary ask ye?"

"No, she come over, but she never said a word. We'll come though; we can come jes' as well's not. Yer lettuce is comin' up, ain't it?"

"Yes, it's a new kind o' lettuce; I got the seed o' Mr. Jameson; you can have some seed this fall if ye want it, Mis' Perkins. They say the leaves grow most as big as cabbage leaves."

"Yes, I sh'd like to git some, mine's the little kind, but it comes airy. I've got some most big enough t'eat a'ready."

"Why laws a me, that is airy!"

"Cou'ldn't you bring cake to the sewin' bee jes' as well as any thing, Mis' Perkins? Mis' Tolbert's goin' to bring jelly and currant jam, an' Mis' Jones is goin' to bring preserve peaches an' cheese, an' Em'ly's goin' to bring tongue an' pickles, an' I'm goin' to furnish the hot rolls and tea. I lef' the cake fer you, 'cause you're so good on cake, Mis' Perkins."

"Why, I'd jest as liv's bring cake as anything; yes, I'll bring cake."

Tabitha stood holding her skirts up almost to her knees; there was something about the very presence of Mrs. Blake that made her feel like holding up her skirts. "Well, I mus' be goin', Mis' Blake, good afternoon."

"Good afternoon, Mis' Perkins, now I shell look fer you an' Merandy airy."

"Yes, we'll come airy."

As soon as the gate swung shut, Tabitha took out her knitting and moved like an automaton along the narrow path beside the road leading to her own gate.

"Merandy, be you sure you washed these tumblers with the G. W. cloth? Seems to me

I see a speck on this one." They had just set down to supper.

"Yes'm, I did, I'm sure."

"I guess that speck's in the glass then; it mus' be." She held it up toward the window, lowered her glasses from the top of her head and inspected it closely. "Yes, it's in the glass. You mus' be careful, Merandy."

"Yes'm."

They had for supper a small dish of cold boiled beans, bread and butter, gooseberry preserves and tea.

Miranda, when she heard of the sewing bee, was like a pea on a griddle. A bright red spot glowed on each cheek. The charity balls of Pepperton were the sewing bees and quiltings. Sometimes the young men came in the evening, when there were plays, such as "Snap and kiss 'em," "Button, button," "Drop the handkerchief," etc., but never at Mrs. Blakes; her house was too small.

"What shall I wear, Aunt Tabby?"

"Why, your black silk, of course." The "of course" was brought out as if the respectability of the Jenkinses had been brought into question.

Miranda had never worn her black silk. It had been made up for her (out of an old one

that had been her mother's) for more than three months and she had never had an opportunity to wear it in reality, though she had many times worn it in her dreams. In her dreams, it had been by turns, torn beyond repair, stolen, and burned up; and the night before it had, in the twinkling of an eye, turned into a pair of broadcloth pantaloons.

Miranda was so worried when she woke up that she lit her candle, opened the large bottom drawer in her bureau, unpinned the sheet her dress was wrapped in, and examined it to make sure it was a dress. When she saw the two sleeves with ruffles of lace in the wrists crossed reverently on the bosom, and the row of jet buttons that glittered in the candle light, she crept back into bed satisfied.

"Merandy, don't be a-settin' there with idle hands. If you're done eatin' you better peel them cold boiled potatoes to fry fer breakfast, an' when you've got that done, sift the flour for the cake; it's got to be baked tonight so it'll be cold fer tomorrer. I've got to go right to my sewin' or I sha'n't git my stent done."

Tabitha made, according to her theory, every motion count. Her hand flew up from the limp muslin with marvelous speed and almost mechanical regularity. One would have thought

to see her work, that something must have happened to all of her nightgowns at once, and that she was obliged to finish this one before she could possibly go to bed.

Tabitha Perkins always sat up straight; it was not natural for her to bend either physically or metaphorically. In her effort to resist the pressure of age, she bore herself at fifty more erectly, if not more gracefully, than she had done at thirty.

She was at heart, and always had been, a Methodist, though for twenty years she had been a regular attendant at the Baptist church.

At the age of twenty-eight, Tabitha Perkins became a widow. Two years later she began receiving the attentions of an old lover whom she had, by parental authority, been forced to discard on account of his wild ways and inattention to business, and who had, since her marriage, reformed and become a pillar of the church.

Jonathan Allen had loved the tall, graceful Tabitha Jenkins with all his better self, and when he returned from one of his vagabond trips to Boston, resolved that it should be the last, he was bitterly disappointed to find that Tabitha's engagement to his hated rival, Richard Perkins, had just been announced.

On the last evening of the protracted meetings in the winter following Tabitha's marriage, Jonathan Allen rose from his seat behind the stove, and, with an air of defiance and an impatient jerk of his broad shoulders, as if he would shake off some restraining influence, "went forward" to the surprise of everybody, and knelt at the mourners' bench.

Whatever it was that took place, he rose a changed man, and on the first opportunity joined the Methodist church of which Tabitha and her husband had long been members.

At the age of thirty (two years after her husband's death) the widow put off all outward show of grief, and when she appeared at meeting one Sunday morning early in September, dressed in violet lawn and white ribbons, at least one good brother voted her more charming than ever.

The following Sunday Jonathan walked home with her from class-meeting and on the next Sunday evening, when they came walking into meeting together, the sisters gave one another knowing looks and whispered behind their hymn books. Every one of them had known all along just how it would be. They were all glad too, good souls (with the exception of two

or three mothers with grown daughters of their own), for they had long known of Jonathan's love for Tabitha, and the sight of his face every Sunday for five years, when brother and sister Perkins walked into meeting, had kept their pity on edge.

When the snows of winter came on, Jonathan and Tabitha were living in that delicious chaotic state of love's uncertainty, between the ecstatic joy of absolute belief and shivering shadows of doubt, verging on an understanding.

One bitter cold Sunday night between Christmas and New Year, Jonathan Allen, accompanied by the minister, Elder Crane, and one of the trustees, Carlos Doolittle, was wading through the deep snow past the house of the young widow Perkins. They had been out to pay a visit to one of their oldest brothers, who lay at death's door with paralysis. On account of the deep snow, there was no service at the church on this Sunday evening.

Jonathan's heart beat faster and the hot blood of youth rushed wildly through his veins as they came up even with Tabitha's little white cottage and saw a light shining in her bedroom window.

"Why, I wonder what Sister Perkins is up

so late for," said the minister. "It must be near eleven o'clock." (In Pepperton nine o'clock was considered bed time.)

"I hope there's nothin' wrong, I hope she's well. Mebbe—mebbe we'd better—mebbe one of us 'd better—" said Elder Crane, casting a significant look at Jonathan—"mebbe you'd better just walk up to the door and see if anybody's sick, Brother Allen."

Jonathan, with a set face and white lips, had faced about and stood staring at the lighted window where, on the lowered shade, was clearly outlined the dark silhouette of the woman he loved, knitting as if her life or that of some one else depended upon it.

The three men stood in line, knee deep in snow, staring blankly at the dark picture. As if of one mind, each man drew out his watch; it was ten minutes before eleven. The watches snapped in unison and were replaced in their pockets.

The minister's eyes were raised for a moment to the heavens and he murmured in a low, hoarse voice, tremulous with emotion, "May the Lord have mercy."

Jonathan was glad the snow was deep; it gave him an excuse for staggering. The wind was blowing hard, beating their cold, wet faces

with sharp, cutting snow. The three men parted without exchanging a word as to what they had seen. Jonathan wiped the frozen tears from his face as he entered his own gate. He could hardly see the path through his ice-bound lashes. His mother, who kept house for him, was in bed; he closed the door softly so as not to wake her.

"Did ye shet the entry door when ye come in, Johnny?" came in a piping voice from the bedroom.

"Yes, mother."

"I wish you'd see if I wound the clock, Johnny."

"Yes, mother."

"An' put a few more sticks o' wood in the stove."

"Yes, mother."

"It's a dretful cold night, ain't it?"

"Pretty cold."

"How did ye find old Father Smith, Johnny?"

"Very bad, mother."

"Ain't he no better?"

"No."

There was a deep sigh in the bedroom followed by an audible groan and a few whispered words.

"Johnny."

"What is it, mother?"

"Do you think them pertaters 'll freeze?"

"No, I don't." The note of irritation in the reply to Mrs. Allen's last question seemed to have a soothing effect, for the bed squeaked out the information that she was turning over.

For two hours Jonathan sat silent and almost immovable before the fire. There was only one thing to be done, he decided. He must have a serious talk with Tabitha; for no longer ago than that very Sunday morning she had spoken in class-meeting, saying: "What a blessed thing it is to have a clean conscience before God." "Good Heaven!" he thought, "and I was about to ask her to be my wife. How can she be such a hypocrite? She don't look it, an' she don't act it usu'ly, I can't git it through my brain nohow—Why, Tabithy—I'd 'a' staked my life on Tabithy;" and a fresh flood of tears rolled down his cheeks.

"I was told las' summer that she knit on Sundays but I didn't b'lieve it an' I can't skeercely b'lieve it now when I see it with m'own eyes. I can never ask her to be my wife now,—unless—unless she repents."

It was on this provision that Jonathan hung his hopes, as he took the nearly burned out candle and walked up the narrow stairway to

his cheerless room. Some water in a tumbler that stood on his table was frozen solid and bulged up in the middle.

"Yes, I must have a real serious talk with Tabithy," said Jonathan, as he wet his fingers and pinched the charred smoking wick of his candle then crept into bed. "I don't b'lieve the poor girl realizes that she's a breakin' the Sabbath." And then Tabitha, all unconscious of the burden on her lover's heart, was carried, with all her sins, to the throne of grace in earnest prayer.

Jonathan had a serious talk with Tabitha, which ended more seriously than he had anticipated.

She was most exasperating in her obstinacy, and would neither admit nor deny knitting on Sundays. She told him she thought she was old enough to judge for herself as to what was right and she "wouldn't be dictated to by nobody." The interview ended, finally, by her ordering him out of doors.

Tabitha continued to go to meeting, but now a cold wave of disapproval swept over her each time she crossed the well-worn threshold of the little church, over which she had walked with uncertain baby steps, clinging to her mother's finger, longer ago than she could remember;

over which she had stepped with white slippered feet as a bride, and over which she had trailed her first garments of mourning in the wake of her husband's coffin.

Two weeks after her quarrel with Jonathan, at the Wednesday evening prayer-meeting, the climax came. Tabitha neither prayed nor spoke; a feeling that the brothers and sisters had lost faith in her kept her silent.

Just before the meeting should have closed, there was an embarrassing silence as deep and awful as if the whole Methodist church had been stranded. A few were kind enough to cough a little to relieve the strain.

One of the sisters, who was by nature visionary, declared afterwards that she saw a dark cloud come down from somewhere about the stove pipe hole and hang just over Tabitha's head. But few believed her; they thought, as no one else saw it, that she must have imagined it.

Finally the minister rose, and said, in low measured words, rendered more impressive by the preceding silence:

"If there is any one present who has a confession to make—or—er has anything to repent of—any secret sins, the brothers and sisters will be glad to listen to her confession; and may the Lord help us to be honest."

He was slowly rubbing the palms of his hands together, and his eyes were fixed on the ceiling over the door, as if he thought it just possible that a few secret sins might show themselves through the plastering.

A few of the more charitable members glanced surreptitiously toward Tabitha, silently praying, "The Lord help her;" a few others who knew not charity, glared at her openly.

Jonathan's white face was bowed and covered with his trembling hands. After another minute or two of silence, the sinner rose to her feet; her tall body swayed a little as if she would fall, then she rested her hand on the door of her pew, stood firmly, and turned so as to face most of them.

"I know what you mean," she began in a voice, tremulous with indignation, "I know perfec'ly well you mean me, an' if I want to knit on Sunday I'm a goin' to do it, an' I sh'd like to see anybody stop me. I know pretty well who's to the bottom o' this, too," with a sneering glance at poor Jonathan, who would have died for her at that very moment—"but I ain't got no secret sins that I know of"—there were groans from several quarters—"an' I ain't got nothing' pertic'lar to repent of, nuther; but it 'pears to me that there's some others here that

ought to lead off in repentin'." She choked up a little here and put her fingers to her white lips, then she continued in a calmer, more natural voice. "I mean whoever 'twas that hired poor ole Grandfather Buckley, that's over seventy year old, to shovel a path for 'em through the snow, to walk to meetin' in, fer fifty cents, an' let him freeze a-doin' of it fer want o' clothes to keep him warm. Them's the one's that ought to confess an' repent it seems to me." Then with a majestic sweep and with her nose in the air, she walked out of the church.

There was another silence, then the people rose, and the minister pronounced the benediction.

"I don't see fer my part what she can be alludin' to," remarked Sister Crabapple as she stepped out into the aisle. "I see the ole man this mornin' an' he had on a good overcoat an' a nice, new pair o' warm mittens." Sister Crabapple had a way of drawing her lips when she spoke, as if she had just tasted of something very puckery.

"God's ways is past findin' out," remarked another sister, shooting wide of the mark but feeling that she ought to say something.

"Well, it 'pears to me, brothers and sisters," said Sister Doolittle, in a weak, cracked voice

(she hesitated, twisting a loose thread in the finger end of her cotton glove), "that mebbe we'd ought to examine our own eyes before we look for moles in other folkses. This is the only fault we have ever found in Sister Perkins."

"Quite right, Sister Doolittle, quite right," said the minister, shaking her hand warmly; then he made a few remarks on charity, and the people dispersed.

Numerous attempts were made by the minister and prominent members of the church to draw Tabitha into a confession or explanation of her conduct, without success. They could do nothing with her, as she would not discuss the matter at all. She had an effectual way of shutting people up; of ending undesirable conversation. The next week she withdrew from the church.

Twenty years had gone by and neither Jonathan nor Tabitha had married. Jonathan had many times tried to speak to Tabitha, but she always appeared to be looking intently at something over and beyond him.

"I don't want to speak to folks that think I'm a hypocrite," she had replied to Miranda when asked why she had not bowed when Mr. Allen raised his hat and spoke to her at the Fourth of July celebration.

Tabitha and Miranda were all ready for the sewing bee.

"Merandy, I guess we'd better take my sewin' machine fixtures over to Mis' Blake. The children's lost all o' her'n. We can git along so much faster if we can use her machine. Machine sewin's good enough fer them children's clothes."

Miranda's hands were shaking with excitement. She had on her black silk, her mother's gold watch and chain, and a breastpin and earrings of cameo that had been in the Jenkins family for two centuries and which she had never before been allowed to wear.

Tabitha wore her black silk, a broad crocheted collar, and breastpin and earrings made of hair of her dead ancestors. The earrings were long, just escaping her shoulders. Tabitha always remarked, when any one spoke of the beauty and wonderful work in her jewelry, that every hair in it was pure Jenkins.

When Tabitha and Miranda arrived at Mrs. Blake's, the sitting-room was already half full of women of all ages, and a buzz of voices greeted each new comer as the door opened to admit her.

Emily Tucker was just taking off her things in Mrs. Blake's stuffy little bedroom when

Tabitha and Miranda entered. She was a spinster of forty-five, short, stout, freckled and fair. People called her good-hearted. With all her faults (some thought she was afflicted with more than should fall to the lot of one woman), Emily was good natured. She was a walking bureau of information (having a gift for scenting out family secrets), and the best news circulator in the village. She nudged Tabitha and whispered:

"The Blodgett woman's here."

"That Blodgett woman" had been in Pepper-ton but a few weeks. She had moved into town from a little farm in the country, where her husband had died three years before, hoping to be able to make a living for herself and little son Teddy, by keeping boarders. She had succeeded finally in getting two,—the singing teacher and her brother's son from Glenwood, Jonas Pelton.

"Well, what if she is here? what of it?" asked Tabitha, who saw by Emily's face that she had a piece of news.

"Why, ain't you heard?" and Emily's eyes, that at times had the look of polished brass, opened wide with surprise.

"No, I ain't heard nothin'."

"Why, they do say that Jonathan Allen—"

Emily tiptoed to the door and looked up and down the hall to make sure that no one was coming—"is a goin' to marry her," she continued in an explosive whisper.

If the widow's face turned grey, Emily could not see it, for the window shade was down. Tabitha stood without a flinch before the glass and went on arranging her side curls.

"Well, guess he's got a right to if he wants to—guess nobody'll object." Then she turned boldly and faced Emily. "Is my collar on straight, Em'ly? Seems to me it's jest a leetle to one side." Emily assured her it was on straight then they walked down stairs to the sitting-room. Tabitha's knees threatened to give way as she walked down the steps, but she bore herself bravely.

It was half past two before the guests had all arrived, and the cutting, basting, and sewing were in full swing.

"Why, I never heard o' such a thing in all my life!" ejaculated Eliza Pepper who sat close to the window. Miranda declared afterwards that she was looking straight at Eliza when she spoke, and that she could see the lilac bush outside right through her nose, it was that thin.

"Nor I," said Mattie Burnham who lived and kept the millinery store in the rooms over the postoffice.

"Why, what is it, Miss Rice, an' how is it managed?" asked Mrs. Blake, who stood in the middle of the room with her hands on her hips.

Miss Rice was a spinster from Boston who was visiting the Crabapples. When Miss Rice laughed, her face looked exactly as if she were going to cry.

"Why, if any one wants to get married he goes to the office—they have a regular office you see," said Miss Rice, looking over her spectacles, "and makes a deposit, I don't know how much, and they arrange a meeting with some woman they have on the list (if it's a man that applies) and if they like one another when they meet, they get married; if they don't like one another, why, they try some one else, an'—is this sleeve all ready to sew up, Mrs. Blodgett?"

"Yes, it is all ready."

"An' so on till they find one that does suit."

"Why, laws a me! An' did you say they was a comin' here, Miss Rice?" asked Susan Grey, a little old maid of sixty, who wore her iron grey hair in stiff little curls that just escaped her shoulders. They floated over her yellow cheeks as she bent over her sewing. Her head was never quite still; its shaking was the result of a nervous disease.

"No, I didn't say they were comin' here, Miss Grey, I said I shouldn't wonder if they came here soliciting, because there are so many unmarried women in Pepperton."

"I guess there air more now than there will be after a while," said Mrs. Cole, the butcher's wife, looking significantly at Mrs. Blodgett. All Mrs. Cole had to keep her upper lip from falling in when she smiled, was her eye teeth.

"O dear! Mis' Perkins, you've cut yer finger, hain't ye?" Tabitha was cutting out some aprons for the children.

"Not much, jest a little," said Tabitha winding a rag round her finger.

"Why, you look dretful pale, Tabitha," said Miss Pepper.

"Why yes, you're as white as chalk," said Miss Grey. "You better lay down a spell."

"O no, ladies, there ain't no 'casion to lay down, I feel perfec'ly well," and Tabitha resumed her place at the cutting table.

"Well," said Miss Tucker, biting off a long basting thread, "I guess them matrimonial agents wouldn't git much to do if they did come here." She spoke guardedly, as if not quite decided, glancing about the room to see if her words met with approval.

"No indeed! no indeed!" and "I should say

not," came from different quarters of the room, and there was a flashing of mature glances suggestive of a sword combat.

"What did you say they called it, Miss Rice?" asked Mrs. Blodgett in her quiet way.

"A Matrimonial Bureau."

"Well, I never!" said Mrs. Elder Crane as she was called. She was the Baptist minister's wife and a very pretty woman with a mouth that made one think of prunes. It was the only observation she made until they were seated at the supper table, when she asked Miss Rice if she would be kind enough to pass the peaches. The word peaches left a pretty expression on her lips.

"Mis' Blake, I'm ready to use the machine now, an' there ain't any band on it; ain't ye got no band?" and Tabitha sat up straight, waiting.

"Why bless me!" said Mrs. Blake feeling for the band. "Why, of course I've got a band, 'twas there this morning—O dear, them boys!" She darted out of doors, returning in a few minutes with the band in her hand. She was warm and panting.

"Why, how tuckered out you do look, Mis' Blake, have ye been runnin' " and, "Where did you find it?" asked two or three in a breath.

"Why, Johnny had it on the dog fer a har-

ness, an' I had to run a'most to the schoolhouse b'fore I could ketch him." Mrs. Blake sank down into the nearest chair and fanned herself with her apron.

"Why, for massy sakes, Miss Tolbert, you've got this wedth in upside down—no ye ain't—yes ye have, it's upside down, sure's the world." It was Mrs. Farley who spoke. She had a weak high pitched voice and walked with crutches; they stood up in a corner of the room.

Prudence would have blushed if she could; she felt like it, but it was impossible; she had one of those unchangeable bilious complexions. Everybody was surprised, for Prudence had never before been known to make a mistake in sewing, and she had no patience with the mistakes of others.

"Why, so I have; I'll fix it," and she did in the shortest time possible.

After the cutting and basting were well under way, conversation, until supper was ready, was mostly drowned in the almost steady hum of the sewing machine.

It was nearly dark when Tabitha and Miranda reached their own gate. They were looking on the ground as if they had lost something.

"I never in my life see any one as careless

as you be, Merandy. Now you go over to Mis' Blake's the first thing in the morning, jest as soon as it's light enough to see, an' hunt fer that hemmer an' feller. They must 'a' slipped out o' paper on the way home, if you're sure you put 'em in; be you sure, Merandy?"

"Yes 'm, I'm sure, Aunt Tabby," said the girl with a doleful face and tearful eyes, continuing to search the ground about her feet.

"We might as well go in, I s'pose; it's too dark to find anything now. I wish you'd make a cup o' tea, Merandy, jest as soon's you git yer dress changed, I declare I couldn't drink that tea o' Mis' Blake's. Did you notice how dirty her teapot cover was? You didn't! well, I don't see how you could help it. Prudence noticed it an' she didn't drink a drop o' her tea, nuther. What was you and Malviny Farley talkin' about when you set over on the lounge together behind me?"

"O, I dunno—How'd you like that currant—"

"Why don't ye tell me what ye was talkin' about? You used my name an'—an' Mis' Blodgett's—I heard part of it—you might as well tell me."

"Why—why—Malviny said Jonathan Allen

was goin' to marry Mis' Blodgett, but her mother thought you'd make him a good deal better wife. I ast how she knew he was goin' to marry her, an' she said 'twas all over town. But I don't b'lieve it an' I told her so."

Tabitha was examining one of her thin silver teaspoons.

"Well, I should say he's got a right to marry whoever he wants to—it ain't likely any man's goin' to ask a woman to marry him that won't speak to him."

"I wish you hed a spoke to him when he bowed to you so perlite at the picnic," said the girl deprecatingly.

"Why, Merandy Jenkins! ain't you ashamed o' yourself? I see myself speakin' to a man that's put me down b'fore the hull town as a hypocrite." Miranda rose suddenly and Tabitha thought the yellow in her eyes looked like sparks of fire. She was pale and trembling.

"Mebbe he didn't, you ain't sure he did; I don't b'lieve he did, nuther,—he ain't that kind of a man; and even if he did, he wa'n't to blame; anybody 'd think the same that didn't know jest how it was. You would yourself, You'd ort to explain to him, that's what you'd ort to do; you ain't actin' like a Christian, Aunt Tabby, that's what you ain't."

Tabitha was amazed at the reproof, but more amazed that it came from her demure little niece who had never before dared to hint that her aunt was not impeccable. To the girl's surprise, Tabitha made no reply to this sudden and unusual outburst, nor did she ever refer to it afterwards.

The following morning Miranda made a thorough but unsuccessful search for the missing hemmer and feller.

It was the Monday morning after the sewing bee. Miranda had finished her washing and was just putting away the tubs after scrubbing the kitchen floor. Tabitha sat by the window in the sitting-room making the last buttonhole in her nightgown when there came a commanding rap on the door. She rose and opened it; a strange young man stood on the door-step.

"Good morning, madam," said he, lifting his hat, "is this Mrs. Perkins?"

Tabitha saw at a glance that he was not a Pepperton man.

"Good mornin'," said she, standing as stiff as a ramrod with the door only half open, "yes, I'm Mis' Perkins."

"Well," said the man, wiping his damp forehead, "I understood, Mrs. Perkins, that you had

the misfortune to lose your feller and—I thought—mebbe—you might—” Tabitha had turned white.

“If you’re one o’ them matrimonial agents, sir,” said she, interrupting him, “you needn’t come around here. I ain’t lost no feller yet ’t I know of—hain’t had none to lose fer twenty year, an’ I don’t want none, nuther,” and she slammed the door in his face.

The young man looked puzzled for a moment, then laughed good naturedly, walked around to the kitchen door and rapped softly. Miranda opened the door. She had just cut her finger and was trying with one hand to wind a rag round it; blood was coursing down her wrist.

“Miss, would you mind givin’ me a drink o’—why, good gracious! how you’ve cut yer finger, hain’t ye? Let me help ye. You can’t half do it up wi’ one hand. Gimme the rag,” and before Miranda had time to refuse or accept the proffered service, this young man, upon whom she had never set eyes before, was dexterously winding up her finger and giving advice about the care of it, as if he had known her all her life.

“You’ll have to be careful an’ not take cold in it, Miss, or the very devil’ll be to pay.”

Miranda jumped a little when he said “devil.”
“Did I hurt ye?”

"No, are ye done?" said she with a sigh. There was a note of regret in her voice.

"Yes, I guess it'll do now." They looked into one anothers' eyes for a moment with the innocent gaze of two stranger babies; then he took her hand again, examining his work, as if in the hope of finding something amiss.

"It—it don't fell too tight, does it, Miss?"

"N—no, I guess not;" then they both blushed and he let go her hand. Miranda could not remember that a young man had ever before touched her hand except in a handshake. She was thinking of it as she stood before him looking down at her wet apron.

"You ain't used to having folks kind to ye, air ye, Miss?" said he, as he sat down on a chair near the door and laid his hat on the floor beside him. He was about twenty-five, tall and slender, with a smooth face and keen dark eyes. Miranda's face brightened up as if she were going to smile.

"O, I dunno, I guess so. Be you dry?"

"Yes—I b'lieve I am."

She filled a glass from the water pail and brought it to him.

"Is that yer mother in there, Miss?" he asked handing her the empty glass.

"No, it's m' a'nt."

"Is she crazy?"

"I dunno, guess not, why?"

"Why, she flew at me like a mad cat 'cause I wanted to sell her a new feller—I heard she'd lost the one we sold her with the machine, Mis' Blake told me."

"Did you sell her the machine?"

"Father did. We're in business together, my name is Pelton—Jonas Pelton."

"O, I guess I know what made her mad," said the girl after a moment's reflection, during which the young man's eyes never left her face. "She must a thought you wanted her to marry."

"Marry! Thunderation!" Miranda gave a little start and opened her eyes wide.

"D—don't swear, Mr. Jonas—a—Mr. Pelton. She—she must 'a' thought you was one o' them matrimonial agents from Boston."

"One o' them what from Boston?"

"Matrimonial agents, but don't speak so loud, she might hear ye."

"Giminee crickets. I don't want to marry her, no sir-ee. I'd ruther marry you, Miss—Miss—say now, Miss, tell a feller what yer name is, won't ye?"

"Miranda Katherine Jenkins," said the girl with a serious face, making him a low courtesy.

"How old be ye?"

"Mos' twenty-four."

"You're jest about a year younger 'n me then," said Jonas, reflectively stroking his bare chin.

"You've got the finest eyes I ever see, Merandy; but you're lame, ain't ye? What's the matter with yer leg?"

"I dunno—nothin', I guess—little too short, that's all."

"Why don't ye have yer shoe fixed so ye won't limp?"

"Why, I couldn't, could I?"

"Course ye could, give it to me, I'll git it fixed fer ye. How much too short is yer leg?"

"'Bout an inch, I guess."

"Give me yer shoe." Miranda liked his kindly authoritative tone; it gave her a feeling of protection. She went into the bedroom and brought out her left shoe. Jones slipped it into his coat pocket.

"I'll bring it back tomorrow night." Then he walked slowly over to the window and back to the girl. "Say, Merandy, s'pose I was one o' them matrimonial agents and sh'd ask you now—you wouldn't think o' marryin' a fellow like me, would ye? I ain't good lookin' 'nough?" Miranda was thinking at that very moment that he was the handsomest man she had ever seen.

"I dunno," she replied with a confused blush, turning her face a little away. "I won't tell till ye ask me. I think you're awful good lookin' though, Jonas," then she looked down at the toe of her felt slipper.

"Do ye now, reely, Merandy?" Jonas slipped his hands into his trousers pockets, "Well I declare, if that ain't queer! Say now, Mirandy, I think you're the nicest girl I ever see. You ain't all tongue like most of 'em," and he put his arm about Miranda's waist. She drew back, coloring deeply. "When I come tomorrow night, I'm goin' to ask ye something, an' I want you to think about it all day so you can say yes or no on the spot an' no foolin'. I'm honest an' I've got a little money laid by. Will ye think 't over?"

"Yes—"

"May I kiss ye, Merandy?" Jonas bent over her till she felt his warm breath on her forehead.

"No," said the girl, springing quickly from him, her face and neck crimson, "Wait—till—till after tomorrow night."

"Very well, Merandy, I guess you're right about it. Good-by, I mus' be goin'." As Jonas stepped out at the door, Tabitha's big yellow cat crowded past him into the kitchen.

"Do ye want yer breakfast, Dickey, poor

Dickey.” Miranda picked the cat up in her arms and gave him a hard hug laying her hot cheek on his soft fur. Just then Tabitha opened the door.

“Why, who be you talkin’ to, Merandy?” she asked, peering about the kitchen. “I was sure I heard ye talkin’ to some one.”

“Why—I was jes’ speakin’ to the cat, Aunt Tabby.”

Miranda kept her promise faithfully and “thought ’t over” all night as well as all day. Tabitha, as was her custom, went on the Tuesday evening following to the Baptist prayer-meeting. Just after she had gone, Jonas appeared at the kitchen door. Miranda had slipped on her prettiest blue gingham with ruffles of starched lace in the neck and sleeves.

“Put ’t on, Merandy, put ’t on,” said Jonas, handing her the shoe. She went into the bedroom, put on her shoe, and came out walking awkwardly, but without the least limp. The sole had been thickened.

“There, I told ye, you’re all right now, Merandy, an’ the prettiest girl in town.” Meranda smiled till she showed her white teeth.

“My, oh my! what pretty teeth you’ve got, Merandy. You must laugh oftener an’ show ’em.” Then he sat silent, his face growing

serious. At last he said, as he rolled his soft hat rim.

"Have ye been a thinkin' 't over, Merandy?" The girl turned her face away; he could see the little red rings of hair clinging to the back of her white neck.

"Yes, Jonas, I've been a-thinkin' 't over."

He took the hand with the cut finger and held it between both his own.

"If I sh'd ask—ye to marry me, Merandy—hang it, that ain't fair! I do ask ye, is it yes er no, an' no foolin'. I'll take good care o' ye, little one, ye needn't be afraid if ye like me."

"I dunno, Jonas." She was so in the habit of saying she didn't know. Jonas dropped her hand and reached for his hat. She grasped him by the sleeve.

"Don't go, Jonas, please don't go. I'd like to marry ye, an' mebbe I will, I like ye dretful well"—she couldn't say love—"I like ye the best in the world but I couldn't leave Aunt Tabby here all 'lone when she's so heart-broke." Miranda's eyes were full of tears. "She don't show it much, but I know she is. She took me, Jonas, when I was little, an' give me a home, or I'd 'a' gone to the poorhouse."

"Do you care anything about that cross old cat, Merandy? Tabby's a good name for her. I'll be darned if it ain't."

"She ain't a cross ole cat," said Miranda bristling, "she's good, awful good, but she's been bad treated; folks has lied about her." And then she went on and told Jonas all about her aunt's trouble in the church, and about Jonathan Allen.

"She's awful unhappy now 'cause he's goin' to marry that Blodgett woman."

Jonas smiled. "He is, is he?"

"Yes, and she's never told the hull truth about that knittin', and she'd never let me tell it; now I jest feel as if I'd ort to. It ain't right."

"Course it ain't right," reiterated Jonas with an angry jerk of his head, "it's what I call blamed mean, 's what I call it. Do you think she'd marry Jonathan now if he asked her?"

"Why, I know she would, but he won't ask 'er; he thinks she knits on Sundays, but she don't, and she never did but jest them two times I tole you 'bout."

"Lemme see," said Jones stroking his bare upper lip, "how'd you say it was? Tell it agin, Merandy, I want to git it right in my mind."

"Why, old Grandfather Buckley—poor ole man, I can see him yet, I was eight year old then—come here one Sunday night a'most froze; one of his fingers was froze, Aunt Tabby said, and she made him some hot tea 'n' toast

an' boiled him an egg; then she went and cut out the ankles of a pair o' my stockin's an' set up most all night a-knittin' thumbs an' hands onto 'em. Then she put new lining in the sleeves of Uncle Dick's overcoat an' give it to him. It took her most all night. She didn't ondress at all, she just laid down on the lounge a while before she got breakfast."

"What was he doin'?"

"Why, she put him to bed with some hot bricks round him. Th' ole man cried, he was that glad. When he went away after breakfas' she told him not to say anything 'bout it; that's the way she always does. That was the night Jonathan an' the preacher went by an' seen her."

"An' they all think she's a hypocrite, do they? an' Jonathan along wi' the rest, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, I call that a gol darn'd shame!" Jonas flushed with anger at the injustice. "I guess we can fix it though, Merandy, if you'll be real smart an' hold yer tongue."

"O Jonas, how?" Miranda sprang to her feet clapping her hands. Jonas sprang up too and caught her in his arms. She struggled a little to free herself, then stood still looking down at the floor.

"Let me go, Jonas, please let me go."

"Well, will ye marry if—if—"

"If we can fix it all right with Aunt Tabby an' Jonathan?"

"Yes, o' course."

"Yes, I will, Jonas," and she raised her head and looked him full in the face. Jonas put his finger under her chin and gave her a quick kiss square on the lips.

"O Jonas!" said she freeing herself, a troubled look coming into her eyes. "What if you couldn't fix it after all, an'—you've kissed me. Aunt Tabby always said—"

"Oh, bother Aunt Tabby, we can fix it, course we can fix it. If she ain't a married Tabby inside of a year, I'll eat the greaser."

"What, what greaser, Jonas?"

"Why, the pancake greaser, you little simpleton."

Miranda made up a little face, "Oh!—I wouldn't, Jonas, if I was you; it wouldn't be good." Jonas looked at her a moment quizzically, then burst into a roar of laughter.

"You don't know much, do ye, Merandy? But you suit me all the better; you ain't full o' nonsense like the Glenwood girls; you say jest what you mean, an' expect other folks to do the same, don't ye? Have ye never been to school, Merandy?"

"No, not a day."

"Can't ye read and write?"

"Course I can; Aunt Tabby learnt me. I can read an' write an' cipher, an' I know history all through, I can answer every question in the book," said the girl, straightening up. "Ask me some."

Jonas was awe-stricken at the extent of Miranda's learning. He gazed at her in silent admiration, but was unable to recall any questions in history as she sat before him prim and straight, and with a look on her face of supreme self-confidence awaiting examination. "Did you ever study grammar, Merandy?"

"Naw!" replied the girl disdainfully, "did you?"

"No, it ain't much good, ye can't use it."

"No, ye can't use it. Is it anything like—like 'rithmetic, Jonas?"

"No, not a bit; it's just as different as can be." Jonas gazed at the girl reflectively.

"That 'counts for it then, if you've never been among other girls."

"'Counts fer what?"

"Why, that you b'lieve I mean everything I say."

"Don't ye, Jonas?" Miranda's lips turned white.

"Why, not everything, I joke sometimes; I

was joking just now 'bout the greaser; I wouldn't eat a greaser, you couldn't hire me to." Then he noticed how white she was, and he gathered her in his arms; her head fell over on his shoulder.

"Great Caesar! Merandy, what's the matter? I meant what I said about marryin' ye, course I did, I wouldn't joke about such a thing as that." He kissed her white lips tenderly and she made no objection.

"I'm glad, Jonas," she said, smiling faintly.

"Now set down here, little girl, an' I'll tell ye some news. That Blodgett woman you spoke about, is my aunt—she's my father's sister. I'm living at her house now, been there mos' three weeks. She's an awful good woman. I know Jonathan Allen a little, too, I've been down to see him about getting a place to work in his mill—sewing machine business don't pay. No, it don't pay; folks round here'd rather sew the old way. I think I'll git a place in the mill about the first of the month. I guess we can fix it so it'll be all right between yer aunt an' Mr. Allen; I feel sure we can, 'cause if he's the man I think he is, and understands how it reely was, why—"

"O Jonas, do you mean it?" and Miranda smiled with delight showing her white teeth.

She stopped suddenly and pouted, striking him a violent blow on the arm with her handkerchief.

"You mustn't, Jonas, we ain't married yet."

"Can't help it, Merandy, I'll do it every time I see them pretty white teeth." Miranda smiled again, she couldn't help it, Jonas was so funny; but she clapped her handkerchief over her mouth so he couldn't see her teeth. Then there was a little scuffle.

"I won't marry ye, Jonas, if ye don't behave better," said the girl, with a smile in her eye and a pout on her lips.

"O yes, ye will," said Jonas, lifting the candle toward the clock. "Good gracious, Merandy! I mus' go this minute, it's mos' nine o'clock."

"Yes, you mus' go, Jonas, Aunt Tabby 'll be here in ten minutes."

"Good night, dear; now hold yer tongue."

"Yes, I will, Jonas," and she gave him a little push toward the door.

Rumors about Jonathan and the Widow Blodgett flew about, after the sewing bee, like feathers in the wind. Every move either of them made was construed, by well-meaning neighbors, into preparations for the wedding. Whether they would live in his or her house

after marriage, was the subject of much discussion. Some thought they would live in her house because it was nearer the mill, others thought they would be more likely to live in his house because it was larger; still others poohed at both these ideas, feeling sure Jonathan would build; some one had seen him one day in conversation with old Ezra Wheeler, who owned half interest in the sawmill.

Tabitha remarked at one time, when asked her opinion on the subject, that she didn't see as it made any difference which house they lived in.

There were a good many dead roses on the bushes that almost covered Tabitha's little white gate, and she had gone out with a basket and pair of old shears to cut them off.

"What a sight o' buds there air on these bushes! Seems to me they're redder 'n they use' to be, too. Don't you think so, Merandy?"

"Oh, I dunno, Aunt 'Tabby, mebbe they be."

"An' seems to me I never see sweet pea vines so full o' blossoms, Merandy, did you?"

"I dunno, I guess not. There's more pink ones this year than last, ever so many more."

"Yes, I dunno but there is," replied Tabitha

looking over toward the sweet peas that had transformed the grey garden fence into a wall of flowers,

It was Monday afternoon. The day before, the Baptist minister had preached a powerful sermon on Christian charity and the sin of harboring grievances.

Tabitha walked home thinking seriously of her trouble with Jonathan. She had always supposed that she had a right to nurse her grievance, as she had been wrongly accused, and that she was committing a sin in doing so had never entered her mind.

She went to sleep on Sunday night, thinking it over, and dreamed that she and her old lover had become reconciled and that she had promised finally to assist at his wedding, and to bake the bride's cake. She told Jonathan, in her dream, all about what started the stories of her working on Sunday; how she had miscounted the days, and when two or three of the neighbors went by to meeting one Sunday morning, she was out scrubbing the kitchen door-step; and when they went home after services, she sat at the window knitting; then on Monday morning, she had dressed up and started to meeting, and not until she passed the schoolhouse and saw through the open windows

the children in their seats, did she awake to a knowledge of her mistake. She soon heard that some were talking about it, but she never offered any explanation because she thought the people of the village ought to have enough faith in her, as long as she had lived among them, to know it was a mistake.

Her explanation had been perfectly satisfactory to Jonathan, in her dream, and when she woke up, they were the best of friends.

The influence of the dream was still upon her as she stood clipping off the dead roses.

"Here, Merandy, take these in the house an' burn 'em up." The girl took the basket half full of dead roses and went into the house.

Tabitha stepped upon a large stone that lay beside the gate, close to the fence, and looked over toward the flour mill. She could see about half of the wheel, and the sparkle of the water in the sunshine as it fell from the slowly turning paddles. She put up one hand to shade her eyes.

She wondered if Jonathan was at the mill. Her dream was so very real; she could feel his presence; it was hard to believe that she had not had a long talk with him. She wondered if she could see his office window if she stepped upon the second board of the fence. She looked

back toward the house to see if Miranda had gone in, then she stepped up.

She could see more than half of the window. She thought at first that she could see a face near the window. She looked with all her might, but it was too far away; she could not be sure.

Some one with a grey team drove up to the mill door and began unloading some bags.

"I guess 't mus' be wheat," thought Tabitha, "that man lifts them bags as if they was pretty heavy; yes, I guess it's wheat, it mus' be. Jonathan ought to have a good home, yes he ought to hev—" She turned her head suddenly toward the gate as if she heard something, then she got down from the fence with the quickest move she had made in years, her face turning pale.

"Why, for massy sakes!" said Tabitha, shrinking behind a rose bush, "there comes a man an' I b'lieve it's Jonathan. What shall I do?"

She had no time to do anything before he opened the gate and stepped in. The thought that he must have seen her on the fence gazing over towards his mill, brought color to her cheeks. She noticed, notwithstanding her agitation, as he turned to latch the gate, that his hair was more white than grey, and that

there was a light sifting of flour over the shoulders of his black coat. She even took time to wonder how she could notice such things at such a moment and if she were awake or dreaming. She knew she was not dreaming when he said, "Good morning, Sister Perkins," for he had always called her by her Christian name, and she was not pleased with the change.

"Good mornin', Jonathan," she responded with a defiant emphasis on the name, "step right this way if ye please an' take a seat; there's some chairs under that low apple tree."

Quivering in every limb she led the way. Her tall figure was proudly erect, though she was conscious of a weakening faith in her own power of self control, for her trembling hands and the nervous twitching of her lips defied her.

"Jes' take that arm chair, Jonathan, I'll set right here on the settee." She was less than half a head taller than Jonathan, but the difference today was more pronounced; the scorn she felt for her own growing weakness added to her height.

"Pretty warm day, ain't it?" said Tabitha, folding her arms to hide her trembling hands. Jonathan admitted that it was warm, as he wiped his damp forehead.

"Dretful dusty, too," she remarked, looking

down at his grey boots. He agreed, also, that it was very dusty, then he fell to examining the lining of his hat, as if searching for an escaped idea.

In order to convince her visitor of her perfect coolness, in case he had any doubt about it, Tabitha coughed.

All doubt was instantly removed. In the sympathy he felt for her embarrassment, Jonathan became master of his own, and he looked her full in the face.

"Tabithy," he began, "I've felt for a good while that we ain't livin' right. I dunno how you feel about it, but that's the way I feel. I've been thinkin' on it most all the while for a week past (Tabitha wondered as the old bitter feeling began to well up in her heart, if he had come again after twenty years on the same errand as before, to try to induce her to confess), an' the more I think on it," he continued, "the more I think you ain't been treated right, Tabithy."

He was looking straight into her eyes now, and all that was noble in him shone forth. His words were measured and far apart, as if each one cost him an effort, and Tabitha saw that his eyes were misty with tears.

"I've come here today t'ask yer forgiveness

fer not trustin' ye instead of tryin' to git ye to confess to what ye wa'n't guilty of."

She gave him a questioning look.

"Oh I know what I'm talkin' about, Tabithy. I know you was doin' God's service that Sunday night, and I b'lieve you had' some good reason the summer b'fore too. I didn't treat ye right an' I ask ye to forgive me."

Up to this, she had not spoken; she had made several attempts but the words seemed to stick somewhere in her throat.

"'Twas all my fault, I can see it now," he continued, after waiting a moment for her to speak. His self accusation loosened her tongue.

"No, it wa'n't, Jonathan; I didn't do right nuther; I hadn't ort to a turned ye out o' doors—'twan't Christian like, an' I've been a thinkin' a good deal about it lately, too. I'm reel glad ye come over. 'Tain't right to live this way; I know it ain't."

"You forgive me then, Tabithy?"

"Yes, Jonathan, an—I—want you—to—to forgive me." Tears were coursing down her cheeks and the hard lines in her face had melted away.

"I do, Tabithy, with all my heart," and they shook hands. Then they drifted into talking

of old times, and finally she alluded, in a delicate way, to his approaching marriage. She hoped he would be happy in the change he was about to make, and have a good comfortable home. She spoke quite naturally, for she had fully made up her mind to it, and also that she herself would die as she was, the Widow Perkins. She was nervously opening and closing her spectacle case as she spoke. She really wished him well, and she looked up into his face to show him that she meant what she said, and to her surprise he was smiling as if amused.

"So you've heard that too, have ye, Tabithy? I guess it's gone the rounds," and he gave way to a low, scarce audible "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You didn't b'lieve it, did ye?" and he looked up at her from under his heavy iron grey brows with a twinkle of the old time mischief in his eyes. Strangers were never sure whether Jonathan was in jest or earnest.

"Why—why—ain't it so?" she gasped. "Ain't you an' Mis' Blodgett goin' to git married, Jonathan?" She was trembling violently now, and to save her life she could not still the twitching of her lips.

Jonathan seated himself beside her on the settee and took one of her trembling hands as if he owned it.

“No, ‘Tabithy, I’m not goin’ to marry Mrs. Blodgett ’t I know of. I don’t know how she feels about marryin’ me. I ain’t never asked her. She’s a good woman, Mis’ Blodgett is, but I don’t want to marry her, an’ I don’t think she wants to marry me. Look a’ here, Tabithy,” and with the characteristic daring of his youth, Jonathan put his arm around her waist, “I told you years ago, didn’t I, the time I come home and found you engaged to Dick, that no woman but you’d ever be my wife, an’ I ain’t changed my mind yet if I be fifty-five years old. I want you to remember, Tabithy, that if Jonathan Allen ever goes to his own weddin’, Tabitha Perkins ’ll not be far away.”

So they talked on and on till the sun turned red and slid down below the horizon, casting a ruddy glow over the western sky.

The following week Tabitha received visits from the Methodist minister and all the leading members of the church, and two weeks later she once more became a member of the church of her choice.

Jonas and Miranda “went forward” the same evening and both were converted before leaving the mourners’ bench.

Tabitha looked happy in spite of her effort to

look as usual; the hard lines refused to be reinstated. She feared it was not quite right to be happy in this vale of tears. She drew a deep sigh now and then from a sense of duty, for the benefit of suffering humanity as a whole, but the sad look accompanying these expressions of sympathy, found no resting place in her face.

"Why, she looks ten years younger, Jonas," said Miranda, "I never see the like."

Jonas was standing in the middle of the kitchen floor with his hands in his trousers pockets.

"Well I do declare, if that don't jes' beat all!"

"What, Jonas?"

"Why, a woman a-stickin' to a man all them years. Now—do—you think, Merandy (and Jonas gave her an appealing look), that you like me as well as—as she does him?"

Miranda smiled and said, "Oh, I dunno, Jonas."

It was late in September, but the weather was still warm. It had rained hard nearly all night, and the green grass under the apple trees was almost covered with brown and yellow leaves. The sun shining on the little pools of water under Tabitha's sitting-room window, cast dancing shadows on the ceiling, and dazzled her eyes.

"Dear me, how bright the sun is! Seems to me I never see such a pretty mornin', did you, Merandy?"

"No, I dunno's I ever did. Where is that robin, Aunt Tabby? I sh'd think he'd be tired out; he's been a-singin' all the mornin'."

Miranda stood in the open door and Tabitha sat by the window, sewing.

"There he is settin' on the gate post," said Tabitha. She stopped sewing and gazed lovingly at the bird.

"O yes, I see him now. Seems to me he sings the sweetest of any robin I ever heard."

"Yes, he—he's got a sweet voice, wonderful sweet," and Tabitha, with a less violent motion, resumed her sewing.

Miranda looked up at the sky. There were a few fleecy clouds like straying sheep scattered over the clear blue. A drop of water from the roof fell on her parted lips; she drank it in with a smile and without giving utterance to the thought that brought an added flush to her cheeks.

"I guess the rain's all over, Aunt Tabby."

"Yes, I guess 'tis," and Tabitha reeled off a fresh thread. "Let me see, what was I a-sayin' a minute ago? Oh yes, besides savin' expense, ye see, Merandy, it'd save goin' through the

mess of bakin' twice, an' it is sech mussy work. Dear me, how this thread knots! I never see anything like it.

"There! now this makes six for you, Merandy, an' I guess that 'll do."

It was nearly supper time. There was a strong odor of spices about the house of Widow Perkins; a little of it had crept into the immaculate parlor, and the calm, pictured face of George Washington, sitting on his horse over the mantel, looked as if he had noticed it, and understood.

"How nice they do look, Aunt Tabby!"

"Yes, they air nice, every one of 'em. I was dretful 'fraid when you put in that last stick o' wood, that you'd burn the fruit cake; it's so hard to bake fruit cake without burnin' it. Now I'll make the tea, Mirandy, an' set the table while you wash up the bake dishes."

"How good that silver cake smells, Aunt Tabby, but some how I—I don't feel hungry, I don't b'lieve I shell want much supper."

"No, I don't s'pose either of us 'll eat much after bakin' so many rich cakes, but—why, for massy sakes alive, Merandy Jenkins, if you ain't a-washin' them plates with the I. W. & S. cloth!"

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